

THE STORY OF RICO

BY
JOHANNA SPYRI



Class PZ7

Book S772

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THE STORY OF RICO



. . . Rico stood as in a dream and did not stir. . . .

The Story of Rico

BY THE SWISS WRITER

Frau JOHANNA SPYRI

*Author of Heidi, Chel,
and many other stories*

TRANSLATED BY

HELENE H. BOLL



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To
The Friends of Many Years
SUSAN S. SHERIDAN, PH. D.
and
ELIZABETH W. CLEVELAND, PH. D.

PREFACE

To Our Boys and Girls:

If you have read some of Johanna Spyri's books you will not want to wait to hear what we would like to say to you, but will want to start right off to read the story. If, however, you have not read any of her stories, we would like to tell you that she was born almost one hundred years ago, in a little country called Switzerland, which has very high mountains and very deep valleys. She loved girls and boys and always wanted to write stories for them, but she never wrote any until she was quite old, and of course she did not know how to speak English, because the language she learned as a child was German.

The girls and boys who could read German liked her stories so well that the woman who translated this story decided to write it just as Madame Spyri would have written it if she had known English. The translator has been careful to preserve the simple, direct sentences that have made this story so attractive to young people.

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The translator understands American boys and girls, for she has been a teacher for many years. She also knows Swiss boys and girls, for she has often visited the places which are mentioned in this story. Madame Spyri liked American children, and when, in 1898, the translator wrote to her for permission to edit "Rosenresli" for high school students who study German, Madame Spyri, in granting the request, replied: "I want to have big and little friends in America."

We know that you will like this story for the author wrote about children whom she really knew, and you too will feel that you actually know the people and the places mentioned.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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PART I

SCHOOL DAYS IN THE MOUNTAINS

CHAPTER I

In the Silent House



IN the Upper Engadine, near the road which leads up the Maloja, lies a lonesome little village—its name is Sils. From there one leaves the road and goes across the field, and behind, quite close to the mountain, lies a small hamlet to which the name of Sils-Maria has been given. There stood, a little distance in the field, two little houses opposite each other. Both these little houses had ancient wooden house-doors and tiny windows placed deep in the wall. Beside one of the houses was a small garden, in which grew vegetables. There also were four flower-pots, the flowers of which were lean and lanky like the vegetables. Near the other house was nothing except a small barn; near the door, two hens strutted in and out. This house was a good deal smaller than the other and the wooden door was black from age.

Every morning, about the same time, a tall man came out of this door, which was so small that he had to bend to get out. The tall man

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had very black, glossy hair and black eyes, and beneath the well-formed nose began a dense, black beard, so that nothing could be seen of the rest of the face except the white teeth which flashed between the hairs of the beard when the man sometimes spoke; which, however, happened rarely.

All the people in Sils knew the man but no one called him by name. With everyone he went by the name of the *Italian*. He regularly went along the narrow path across the field towards Sils and up the Maloja. Much road-building was going on there and the Italian worked there. But when he did not go up the road, he went down toward St. Moritz. There houses were being built and there also he found work. There he remained during the day and only returned in the evening. Usually, when he stepped out of the door in the morning a small boy stood behind him, who remained standing on the threshold when the father was outside, and looked with his large dark eyes after him or elsewhere, one could not say where; for it seemed as if those dark eyes looked beyond everything that lay before them and at something which no one else could see.

On Sunday afternoons, when the sun was shining, both stepped out of the little house

IN THE SILENT HOUSE

and walked side by side up the road. And if one looked at them, one saw the same thing in two forms, only in the boy everything was in miniature; but it was like a piece of the father, up to the black beard which the child did not yet have, only a narrow, pale little face was to be seen, with the well-formed little nose in the centre, and around the mouth was something sad, just as if it did not care to laugh.

When now the two were walking thus side by side, neither said a word to the other. The father usually hummed a song, often he sang louder, and the little boy listened. But when it was raining on Sunday, then the father sat at home in the little house on the bench near the window, and the little boy sat beside him and again they said nothing to each other. But sometimes the father pulled a harmonica out of his pocket and played one tune after another, and the boy listened attentively. Sometimes he would take a comb or a leaf and bring forth melodies, or he would carve a piece of wood in shape and whistle a song on it. It seemed that there was nothing from which he could not extract music. But once he had brought a violin home, which so delighted the little boy that he could not forget it. The father had played many airs and melodies on it and the

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little boy had steadily watched him, and had not only listened, but when the father had put away the violin, the little boy had softly taken it and had tried to see how the melodies were drawn from it. And the father had smiled and had said: "Well, then, come," and had placed his big fingers on the little ones with his left hand, and with his right he had taken the boy's hand and the bow in his own, and so they had, for a long time, continued to fiddle all kinds of melodies.

The next week, when father was away, the little boy tried to play, and finally he really did play a melody. Then, one day the violin disappeared and was never seen again. At times when they were sitting together, the father began to sing, at first softly, then always more distinctly. Then the boy joined in and when he could not sing the words, he sang the tunes, for the father always sang in Italian, and the boy understood much, but did not know the words well enough to sing them. There was however one melody which he knew better than the others, for his father had sung the song a hundred times. It belonged to a long song which began

"Una sera
La Peschiera—"

IN THE SILENT HOUSE

It was a quiet, pensive melody, from which someone had written the juvenile romance so that he sang it always with delight and quite devotedly, and it sounded well, for the little fellow had a voice as clear as a bell, and it blended well with his father's rich bass. Every time that they sang this song, the father patted the little one on the shoulder and said: "Bene, Henrico, va bene." (Good, Henry, that's good.)

It was only the father who called the boy "Henrico," by everyone else he was called "Rico."

There was also an aunt who lived in the household; she mended and cooked and kept things in order. In the winter she sat near the stove and span; then Rico always had to think out, how he could arrange his outings, for as soon as he opened the door, the aunt said: "Do leave the door alone, it is getting quite cold in the room." Often he was alone for a long time with the aunt because his father had work somewhere below in the valley and stayed away for many weeks at a time.

CHAPTER II

Happy Days at School



ICO was approaching his ninth year. He had attended school for two winters, for in summer time there was no school there in the mountains, for then the schoolmaster had to look after his fields, had to cut hay and to hoe just like everybody else, for no one had time for school in the summer. But this did not trouble Rico, he knew how to entertain himself. In the morning he would often stand in front of his house, until the door of the house across the road opened, and a little girl came out and looked laughingly across to him. Then Rico would run quickly to her, for the children had much to tell each other since last evening, when they had parted, just before Stineli was called into the house.

The girl's name was Stineli and she was the same age as Rico; they had walked to school together and were in the same class, and they had been always together; for it was only a small distance between their homes, and they were the best of friends.

HAPPY DAYS AT SCHOOL

Rico had only this one friend, among the boys round about he had none, and when they fought and threw each other on the ground and stood on their heads, he went away and did not even look back. But when they shouted: "Now we will give Rico a good whipping," then he stopped, stood very straight, but did nothing; for with his large dark eyes he looked so strangely at them that no one came near him.

But he was happy with Stineli. She had a little snub nose, and above it a pair of brown eyes which were always laughing, and she had two brown plaits tight around her head, which looked very neat, for Stineli was a neat girl and knew how to help herself. Stineli who was about nine years old, was the oldest, and so had to help her mother the whole day long, for much had to be done. For after Stineli came Trudi and Sami and Peterli, and then Urschli and Anne-Deteli and Kunzli, and then there was the baby who had not yet been christened and therefore had no name. Stineli was called from all sides, and through having to help here and there and run hither and thither the whole day long, she had become so quick that everything was done as if of itself. She had put on three stockings and two shoes and tied them,

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before Trudi, who was to help one of the children, had brought the legs into the right position. And when the little ones called Stineli in the room and at the same time the mother called her from the kitchen, then the father shouted from the barn to Stineli for he had lost his cap, or the whip was entangled, and Stineli had to help him, for she found the cap at once, it was usually on the feed-box, and her nimble fingers quickly untwisted the whipcord.

So Stineli was always on the run or working; but she always was quite happy and cheerful with all, and in winter she was glad about the school for then she walked there and back again with Rico, and at recess they also walked together. And in the summer she was happy again, for there were the beautiful Sunday evenings when she could get out, then she went for a walk with Rico, who had been waiting for a long time at his door. Then they took hold of each other's hands and ran over the large meadow to the wood-covered height which extends far into the lake like an island. There they sat beneath the fir-trees and looked down into the green lake, and they had so much to tell and to ask, and they felt so happy that Stineli was glad the whole week, and through everything, for Sunday always came again.

HAPPY DAYS AT SCHOOL

But there was still another person in the cottage who now and then called for Stineli, that was the old grandmother. But she did not call for Stineli to help her; she wanted to give her perhaps a small coin which she happened to come across, or something else, for Stineli was her favorite, and she saw more than anyone else how the child had to work for her age. Therefore she liked to give her a little money so that Stineli, like other children, could buy something when fair-time came round, perhaps some red ribbon or a needle-case. Grandmother liked Rico too, and she liked to see the two together, and sometimes she helped so that Stineli could stay a little while with Rico.

In the summer evening, grandmother always sat before the cottage on the wood log which lay there, and Stineli and Rico stood by her and she told them stories. When the prayer-bell began to ring from the little church tower, then the grandmother said to the children: "Each of you must now say the Lord's prayer, and you must never forget that you must pray the Lord's prayer; that is why the bell rings." "And you see, children," the grandmother would say now and then, "I have lived a long time and have seen much, and I do not know

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one single person, who had no need of the Lord's prayer once in his life, but I have known many a one who has sought it in great fear, and has no longer found it when need came." Then Stineli and Rico stood there very devoutly, and each said the prayer.

Now May had come and school had to be kept a while longer, but it could not be for long, for things were sprouting under the trees and long stretches were free from snow. Rico was standing in the doorway and was thinking these things. Then he looked at the door across the way and wondered if it was not going to be opened. Now it opened and Stineli came jumping out.

"Have you stood there long? Have you again been surprised at something, Rico?" she called out, laughing heartily. "Do you see, it is quite early today, we can walk quite slowly."

Now they took each other's hands and walked toward school.

"Are you still thinking of the lake?" Stineli asked.

"Of course," Rico assured her with a serious face, "and I sometimes dream of it, and I see such large, red flowers and across it I see the violet mountains."

"Oh, what one dreams only once, never

HAPPY DAYS AT SCHOOL

comes true," Stineli said quickly. "I once dreamed that Peterli was climbing all alone up the very highest fir-tree, and when he was sitting on the topmost branch, it was a bird, and he called down: 'Stineli, put on my stockings.' Now you can see that it is nothing."

Rico had to think deeply, how that could be, for his dream could not be true and yet it was like something that returned to his mind. But they had now arrived at the schoolhouse, and a large crowd of children came noisily from the other side. They all entered together and soon after the schoolmaster came. He was an old man with thin gray hair, for he had been teacher for so many, many years that his hair had turned gray and had fallen out. They now began in good earnest to spell and make syllables, then came the 1×1 , and last of all came the turn for singing, and all sang with full voices:

"You lambkins come down
From sun-covered height,
The day is departing,
It soon will be night."

And the teacher played on his violin.

But Rico looked so intently at the violin and the teacher's fingers watching how he

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touched the strings, that he forgot to sing and did not utter another sound. Now, all at once, the whole herd of singers fell gradually to a whole half tone lower; then the violin too began to be shaky, and now all the singers flattened still more, and one cannot know how low they would have gone, had not the teacher thrown the violin on the table and cried angrily: "What kind of singing is that! You senseless screamers! If I only knew who sings so wrong and spoils my song!"

Then a little fellow, who sat next to Rico, shouted: "I know why we sang so, it always goes like that when Rico stops singing."

"Rico, Rico, what do I hear?" the teacher said seriously, turning to the former. "You are usually a good boy, but inattention is a great mistake, you have heard it now. One single inattentive scholar can ruin the singing of a whole class. Now we will begin once more, and now Rico, pay attention."

Rico now began with firm clear voice and the violin followed his lead, and all the children sang with all their might to the very end, so that it really was a pleasure to listen. This satisfied the teacher, who rubbed his hands and added a few firm strokes on the violin, and said contentedly: "Ah! it is a fine instrument."

CHAPTER III

The Old Schoolmaster's Violin



OUTSIDE, Stineli and Rico had freed themselves from the crowd and started together on their homeward way.

“Rico, did you stop singing because you were astonished at something?” asked Stineli. “Did the lake come into your thoughts?”

“No, something else,” said Rico. “I know now how one plays ‘You lambkins come down.’ If I only had a violin.” This wish must have been close to Rico’s heart, for it came out with a deep sigh. Stineli was at once full of compassion and venturesome thoughts.

“We will buy one together,” she suddenly cried with great joy of the help that had come into her mind. “I have many coins which grandmother has given me. I think I have as many as twelve, how many have you?”

“None at all,” Rico said sadly. “Father gave me a few before he went away. But my aunt said that I would only spend them, and

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has taken them and locked them in her chest up in the attic.”

But Stineli did not lose heart. “Perhaps we have enough money, and I am sure grandmother will give me a little more,” she said comfortingly. “Do you know, Rico, I do not think that a violin will cost much; it is nothing but wood with four strings pulled tight on it, that cannot cost much. You must ask the teacher tomorrow what his violin has cost, and then we will look for one.”

So it was arranged, and Stineli thought that she would do at home all she possibly could, and she would get up quite early and kindle the fire before her mother was up; for when she kept on doing something extra early and late, then her grandmother often stuck a coin in her pocket.

The next morning when school was out, Stineli went out alone, and she stopped at the corner of the schoolhouse and waited for Rico, who was now to ask the teacher about the violin. He did not come out for very long and Stineli kept peeping about with increasing impatience from behind the woodpile; but it was only the other boys who were still standing here and there. But finally, Rico came from behind the woodpile. Now he was here!

THE OLD SCHOOLMASTER'S VIOLIN

“What did he say that it cost?” Stineli called out to Rico, holding her breath with expectation.

“I did not like to ask,” Rico answered despairingly.

“What a pity!” said Stineli and stood there quite dumbfounded, but not for long. “It does not matter, Rico,” she said, quite happy again, and took his hand to go home, “you can ask tomorrow. I have this morning received another penny from grandmother, because I was up when she came into the kitchen.”

But things went the same way the next day and the day after. Rico stayed every day half an hour before the teacher's door and did not go in to ask his question. Then Stineli thought: “If he does not ask for another three days, then I shall ask the price.” But on the fourth day when Rico again stood hesitatingly before the door, it opened suddenly, and the teacher came hastily out, and gave Rico such a push that the slight little fellow flew several steps backward. The teacher stood there much surprised and rather angry. “What does that mean, Rico?” he asked when the boy stood in his old place again. “Why do you come to a door and do not knock, if you have some business there; if you have nothing to

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do there, why don't you go away? But if you have a message for me, then you can give it to me here. What do you want?"

"How much does a violin cost?" came from Rico's mouth in great haste, because he was afraid.

The schoolmaster's displeasure increased visibly. "Rico, what shall I think of you?" he asked with a severe countenance. "Do you come to your teacher's door to ask useless questions, or have you some purpose? What did you mean to say by that?"

"I did not mean to say anything," Rico said shyly. "I only wanted to ask, what a violin is worth."

"You did not understand me, Rico, now pay close attention to what I tell you: a person says something and has a purpose in his mind; if he has no purpose, they are useless words. Now listen well, Rico. Did you put the question without any purpose, or from curiosity, or did someone send you, who would like to buy a violin?"

"I should like to buy one," said Rico, somewhat more decisively; but he was much frightened when the teacher in great anger cried:

"What, what do you say? Such a—lost, senseless, foreign little boy as you are, wants to

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buy a violin? Do you know what a violin is? Do you know how old I was and what I had learned before I could buy a violin? I was teacher, a full teacher, twenty-two years old, and had my appointment! And a little fellow as you are! And now I will tell you what a violin costs. I have paid six hard florins for it. Can you imagine the amount? Let us see how many blutzgers that would make: one florin has one hundred blutzgers, then six florins must be six times one hundred. How many are there? How many? Well, Rico, you are not usually one of the stupid ones. How many?"

"Six hundred," Rico said softly, for his voice refused him obedience from pure fright, when he comprehended the number and compared Stineli's twelve blutzgers with it.

"And then, little boy, what do you think?" the teacher continued. "Do you think that one just takes the violin in his hand and it begins to make music? No, indeed, something else has to be done before one can play. Come in here,"—and the teacher opened the door and took the violin from the wall—"there, take it in your arm and the bow in your hand; so, little boy, and if you can bring out c, d, e, f, I will give you half a florin."

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Rico had really the violin in his arm; his eyes shone like fire; c, d, e, f, he played firmly and quite correctly.

“You rogue!” the teacher exclaimed with astonishment. “Who has taught you that? How can you find the notes?”

“I can do something else if I may play it,” said Rico and looked longingly at the instrument in his arm.

“Play it!” said the teacher. Now Rico played with all firmness and eyes beaming with joy:

“You lambkins come down
From sun-covered height,
The day is departing,
It soon will be night.”

The teacher had sat down on a chair and had put on his glasses. He looked with serious study now at Rico's fingers, then at his sparkling eyes, and then back to the fingers. Rico had finished.

“Come here, Rico!”

The teacher moved his chair into the light and Rico had to stand directly in front of him. “So, now I have to talk with you. Your father is an Italian, Rico, and you see, down below all kinds of things happen of which we

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here, in the mountains, know nothing. Now look right in my eyes and tell me uprightly and truthfully, how you managed to play this melody without mistake on my violin."

Rico looked at the teacher with open, truthful eyes and said: "I have learned from you, how to play the verses in the singing lessons where we sing them so often."

These words gave the matter a quite different turn. The teacher rose and walked a few times up and down the room. Then he himself was the cause of this wonderful phenomenon; there was, then, no witchery. With a reconciled mind he drew his purse from its keeping-place and gave Rico a half-florin, saying: "Here is your half-florin, Rico, it is yours by right. Continue as you have begun and pay close attention to the violin playing as long as you go to school, then you can bring it to something, and in twelve or fourteen years the time will have come when you, too, can buy a violin. Now you may go."

Rico cast one more look at the violin, then he went out with a very sad heart.

Stineli came from behind the woodpile. "This time you have stayed a long time. Have you asked?"

"Everything is lost," said Rico, and his eyes

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came so close together from trouble, that a thick, black line was over both eyes. "A violin costs six hundred blutzgers and in fourteen years I may be able to buy one, when everyone is long since dead. Who would want to be alive in fourteen years. There, you may have that, I do not want it." With these words he pressed the half-florin into her hand.

"Six hundred blutzgers!" repeated Stineli, full of horror. "But who gave you this piece of money?"

Rico now told her everything that had happened at the teacher's house and said again the words of greatest sorrow: "Now everything is lost."

Stineli wanted to give him back the half-florin, as a small comfort; but he was quite angry with the innocent half-florin and refused to take it.

Then Stineli said: "I will put it with my blutzgers and we will share in the money together, and everything belongs to us both."

This time Stineli too was very downcast, but when she came with Rico around the corner, to the field-path, the narrow path lay so beautiful in the sun up to the cottage door, and in front of the door the spot shone so white, that Stineli cried out: "Look, look, summer is coming,

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Rico, and we can go again into the woods above, then you will be glad again. Shall we go next Sunday?"


"I shall never be glad again," said Rico, "but if you want to go I will go with you."

At the door it was decided that they would go across to the forest height, and joy was again on top in Stineli. During the week she did what she could, and that was much. Peterli and Sami and Urschli had the measles, and in the barn a goat was sick, and had to have hot water very often. Stineli had to run here and there and lend a hand everywhere, as soon as she came from school, and Saturday the whole day, until late in the evening, and even then she had still to clean the feeding-pail. And the father said in the evening:

"Stineli is real handy."

CHAPTER IV

The Distant, Nameless Lake

HEN Stineli opened her eyes on the Sunday morning she had a great joy in her heart, and at first she did not know the reason, until she remembered that it was Sunday, and that her grandmother had said late in the evening: "Tomorrow you must have the whole afternoon; it belongs to you."

When the midday meal was over, and Stineli had put away all the plates and dishes, and had washed the table, Peterli called out: "Come to me, Stineli!" and the two others in bed shouted: "No, come to me!" and the father said: "No, Stineli must look after the goat."

But the grandmother went out into the kitchen and beckoned to Stineli. "Go now," she said. "I will look after the goat and the children, and when the evening bell rings, then you both will come home." The grandmother knew that there were two of them.

Now Stineli shot away like a bird, for which

THE DISTANT NAMELESS LAKE

one has opened the cage door, and across the way stood Rico, who had already waited a long time. Both marched over the meadows toward the wood-covered height. The sun was shining on all the mountains and the blue sky was over them. On the shady side they had to walk a little in the snow until they came higher but the sun rose and it shone on the lake, and there were lovely dry places on the mountain side, right over the water. There the children sat down; a sharp wind was blowing over the height and sang around their ears. Stineli was filled with pleasure and joy. She kept on crying: "Look, look, Rico, the sun! Oh, how beautiful! Now summer is coming; look how the lake glitters. There cannot be a more beautiful lake than this one," she said confidently.

"Ah, Stineli, you should just see the lake I mean," and Rico looked over the lake so lost in thought, as if that which he should like to see was there where nothing could be seen. "You see there are no such black fir-trees with needles; there are such shiny green leaves and large red flowers, and the mountains do not stand so high and black and so near, they are far beyond the lake and are quite violet, and in the sky and on the lake everything is golden and still

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and warm; there the wind does not act so, and one's shoes are not always full of snow, and one can always sit on the ground and look around."

Stineli was quite drawn along; she already saw the red flowers and the golden lake before her, that must indeed be so beautiful.

"Perhaps sometime you may go there again and see the golden lake and everything; do you know the way?"

"One goes up the Maloja, I have been there with my father; and there he pointed out the road to me, it goes down the whole mountain, always winding round and round, and far below is the lake, but so very, very far, that one can hardly get there."

"Oh, that is quite easy," said Stineli, "you must just keep on walking, then you will surely get there at last."

"But father has told me something else, you see, Stineli: if one goes a long way, and one goes into an inn and eats and sleeps there, then one must pay, and so one must always have money."

"Oh, we have a lot of money," cried Stineli triumphantly. But Rico did not triumph with her.

"That is just as good as nothing, I know that from the violin," Rico said sadly.

THE DISTANT NAMELESS LAKE

“Then stay home, Rico, see, it is beautiful at home.”

Rico sat quite thoughtful for a while, his head resting on his arm and his eyebrows met. Now he turned again to Stineli, who had been pulling up the tender, green moss, and was making a little bed of it, two pillows and a cover. She was going to bring them to sick Urschli. “You say, Stineli, that I should stay at home; but do you see, I feel as if I do not know where I am at home.”

“What do you say?” cried Stineli, and threw a whole handful of moss away from pure astonishment. “Here you are at home, of course. One is always at home where one has father and moth—” here she suddenly stopped. Rico had no mother and his father had gone away a long time ago, and the aunt—Stineli never came near the aunt, she had never given her a kind word—she did not know what to say. But Stineli could not remain long in such an uncertain mood. Rico had again begun to wonder. Suddenly she seized his arm and cried:

“I should like to know something. What is the name of the lake where it is so beautiful?”

Rico thought for a while. “I do not know the name,” he said, being surprised himself.

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Then Stineli proposed that they should ask someone what it was called, for if Rico ever got enough money and could go, then he would have to ask for the road, and to do that, he was obliged to know the name.

Now they began to consult whom they could ask: the teacher or the grandmother. Then Rico thought that his father would know best and he would ask him as soon as he should return.

Meanwhile time had sped and suddenly, far away, the children heard the faint ringing of a bell. They knew the tone, it was the prayer-bell. Both jumped up and they ran hand in hand through shrubs and down the hillside and over the meadow, and the bell had not stopped long when they stood before the door where the grandmother was looking for them.

Stineli had to go into the house at once and the grandmother said quickly to Rico: "You, too, go right into the house and do not stay before the door."

The grandmother had never told him that before, although he always did so, for he had no desire to go into the house, and he always stood for some time outside the door, before he opened it. But he obeyed the grandmother and went in at once.

CHAPTER V

Rico Learns the Name of his Lake



HE aunt was not in the room, so Rico went out again and opened the kitchen door. There she was, but before he could enter, she lifted her finger and said: "Bst! Bst! don't open and shut all doors and do not make such an awful noise. Go into the living-room, and keep quiet. Your father lies up-stairs in the bedroom; they have brought him on a wagon, he is ill."

Rico went in and sat down on the bench, which was along the wall, and did not move. So he sat a good half hour. The aunt was rummaging about the kitchen. Then Rico thought he would go quite softly and look into his father's room. His father might want to eat something for supper, for supper-time had long passed.

He crept behind the stove and up a narrow stair into the room. After a short time he came back again and went at once out into the kitchen and to the aunt. Then he said softly: "Aunt, come!"

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The latter was on the point of yelling at him when her glance fell on his face: it was deathly pale; cheeks and lips were like a sheet, and his eyes looked so black that the aunt was almost afraid. "What is the matter?" she asked hastily, and followed him involuntarily. He went softly up the stairs and into the room. There lay the father on his bed with fixed eyes; he was dead.

"Oh, oh," screamed the aunt, and screaming she ran out of the door on the other side of the room which led to the passage, down the stairs, and straight across the road and into the other house, and begged the neighbor and grandmother to go over. From there she ran to the teacher, and then to the selectman.

So one after the other came and entered the quiet room, until it was full of people, for one heard from the other what had happened. And in the midst of this confusion and hearing the many words of lamentation from all neighbors, Rico stood at the bed, without saying a word, never moving, only looking at his father. Through the whole week people who wanted to look at the dead man, and hear from the aunt how things had happened, came daily to the house, so that Rico heard the story over and over. His father had had work below

RICO LEARNS THE NAME OF HIS LAKE

near St. Gallen where a railroad was being built. He had been struck on his head by the blasting of a rock, and had a deep wound, and since he could no longer work, he had wanted to go home, to take care of himself until he was better. But the long journey, partly on foot, and partly lying in an open wagon, had been too much for him. He arrived home Sunday toward evening, and lay down on his bed, never to rise again. He had passed away, without anyone seeing him, for Rico had found him already dead.

The Sunday after, the man was buried. Rico was the only mourner who followed the coffin; a few kind neighbors had joined him; so the procession went to Sils. Rico heard how the minister in the church read aloud: "The departed man's name was Henrico Trevillo and he was born at Peschiera on the Garda Lake."

It seemed to Rico that he heard something that he had known before, but he had not been able to put it together. He had always seen the lake before him, when he had sung with his father:

"Una sera
In Peschiera."

THE STORY OF RICO

But he had not known why. He had to repeat softly the names, and a number of old songs appeared with them in his mind.

When he wandered home, quite alone, he saw the grandmother out on the woodblock and Stineli beside her. She beckoned to him. When he came she stuck a piece of pear-cake into his pocket, as she had done to Stineli a little while before, and said that they both should take a walk, for Rico must not be alone on this day. Then the children walked out into the bright evening. The grandmother remained sitting on her wood stump and looked compassionately after the small dark boy until they disappeared out of sight. Then she said softly to herself:

“No, what He does and lets be done
For thy own good is meant.”

CHAPTER VI

Grandmother Tells about Rico's Mother



ON the road from Sils the teacher came walking up, leaning heavily on his staff. He had attended the funeral. He coughed and gasped, and when he arrived where the grandmother was sitting and had wished her a good evening, he added: "If you allow it, neighbor, I will take a seat beside you for a little while, for I have some trouble with my throat and my chest; but what can the likes of us say with soon seventy years behind us, if one buries, as today, such a young man. He was not thirty-five years old."

He had sat down beside the grandmother. "I, too, have to think of that," said the latter, "that I, a woman of seventy-five, remain, and here and there a young one has to go, of whom one should think that he was needed."

"No doubt old people are left for some good, where would otherwise be the example for the young?" remarked the teacher. "But, neighbor, what do you think will become of the little fellow across the way?"

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“Yes, what will become of him?” the grandmother repeated. “I, too, ask that, and if I had to look to mankind, then I should not know how to answer. But there is still a Father in heaven, who sees the forsaken children. He will, I am sure, find a way for the little boy.”

“Tell me, neighbor, how did it happen, that the Italian married the daughter of your neighbor across the way? One could never find out anything about this man.”

“It went just as it usually goes, good neighbor,” said the grandmother. “You remember that my old friend, Mrs. Anne-Dete, had lost all her children and her husband also, and lived alone across the way in the cottage, with Marie-Seppli, who was a merry child. It may be eleven or twelve years by now, when Trevillo came here for the first time. He had work on the foot of the Maloja, and came down here with the young fellows. Marie-Seppli and he had hardly seen each other, when they agreed that they would marry. And one has to say that of Trevillo, he was not only a very handsome fellow, whom everyone liked, but also a respectable and upright man. Anne-Dete herself took delight in him. To be sure she would have liked to have had the young

GRANDMOTHER TELLS ABOUT RICO

couple remain with her in her cottage, and Trevillo would gladly have done so; he got on well with his mother-in-law, and as for his wife, he did whatever she wanted. But he had taken her often for a walk up the Maloja and had looked down the road, which one can see from there, which leads into the valley, and he had told her how things were down below, where he had been at home. Then Marie-Seppli had taken it into her head, that she wanted to go down, and nothing could be done, however much her mother begged and grieved, not to go down below to live. But Trevillo said that she must have no anxiety on that account, that he had a small farm and a little house down below, he had wanted to go out a little into the world, *that* was how he had come to Sils-Maria.—Now Marie-Seppli had won, and after the wedding she wanted to go at once down the mountain. She wrote to her mother that she was very happy and that Trevillo was the best of husbands.

“But after five or six years, Trevillo one day stepped into the room of my neighbor Anne-Dete, and led a little boy by the hand and said: ‘Here, mother, this is the only thing that is left me of Marie-Seppli; she lies buried below with her other little children. He was her first and

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dearest.' She has told me that. Then he had sat down on the bench, where he had seen Marie-Seppli for the first time, and had said, here he would stay with his little boy, if it suited his mother; for he had not been able to bear it any longer down below.

"Joy and sorrow came together for Anne-Dete. Little Rico was about four years old and was a quiet, thoughtful child, without noise and fault, and he was her last joy. A year after, she died, and advised Trevillo to take the cousin of Anne-Dete into his house for the household and the child."

"So, so," observed the teacher when the grandmother was silent, "I did not know anything of all that. Well, it is possible that relations on Trevillo's side may turn up as time passes, and they can be urged to do something."

"Relations," sighed the grandmother, "the aunt is a relation, but he receives few good words from her in a whole year!"

The teacher rose laboriously. "It goes down hill with me, neighbor," he said, shaking his head, "I do not know what has played havoc with my strength."

Grandmother cheered him up, saying he was a young man in comparison with her. But she had to wonder about how slowly he walked.

CHAPTER VII

A Precious Inheritance



NOW there came many beautiful summer days and whenever the grandmother could do it, she arranged that Stineli got a free moment; but always more work had to be done in the house. Rico stood many an hour on his doorstep and wondered and looked across at the door, to see whether Stineli was coming.

Toward the end of September, when the people were sitting out doors, to enjoy the last warm evenings, the teacher too sat now and then outside his door; but he looked so thin, and coughed more and more, and one morning, when he wanted to get up he had no strength, and fell back in his pillows. There he lay very still and began to think about all kinds of things, what would happen if he had to die. He had no children and his wife had been dead long since, only an old servant was with him in his house. He had principally to think of what was to become of all the things that belonged to him, if he were no longer there, and since his

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violin was hanging on the wall just opposite him, he said to himself: "I should have to leave that, too."

And then he thought of the day, when Rico had stood there and had played on the violin, and he would rather that the little boy should have it, than a distant cousin, who did not know anything about playing a violin. So he thought he might let Rico have it cheap, for, no doubt, the father must have left something to his little boy. But then he remembered that, if he had to leave his violin, he could no longer use the money. But he could not give an instrument away for which he had paid six hard florins. So he thought, keener and always keener, how he need not give the violin, for nothing; but at the end of all thinking it came always clearly before his eyes that there, where he could not take his violin, nothing else could be taken, and all had to stay where it was.

Toward evening, fever gained the upperhand more and more and he lay during the whole night in a struggle with many thoughts, and old things, which he had long since forgotten, appeared to him, and pursued him; so that in the morning he lay there completely exhausted and had only one thought: he should like to do

A PRECIOUS INHERITANCE

something kind, and perform some good deed right away.

He knocked with his cane on the wall until the old servant came, and he sent her up to the grandmother, that she might come to him, but asked that she come very soon.

The grandmother entered his room soon afterward, and before she could ask how it was with him, he said: "Be so good as to take down the violin and bring it to the little orphan; I will give it to him; tell him to look after it well."

The grandmother had to wonder much, and had to exclaim: "What will Rico do! What will Rico say!" Then she noticed that the teacher had become a little restless, as if great haste were needed. So she left him and hastened as quickly as she could, with her gift under her arm, over the field, for she could hardly wait to tell Rico of his good luck.

Rico stood at the door and at a sign from the grandmother he ran to meet her.

"There, Rico," she said, and held the violin toward him, "the teacher sends you this for a present, it is yours."

Rico stood as in a dream, but it was true; grandmother was really holding the violin out to him.

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“Take it, Rico, it is yours,” she repeated.

Trembling from joy and excitement, Rico now seized his violin, took it in his arm and stared at it, as if it would be taken again from him if he were to look away.

“You must take good care of it,” the grandmother completed her mission, but she had to laugh a little, for it seemed to her that the admonition was unnecessary. “And Rico, do not forget the teacher, and never forget what he has done for you; he is very sick.”

The grandmother went now into her house, and Rico hastened with his treasure upstairs to his room; he was always alone there.

He sat down and played and played and forgot eating and drinking and all about the time. Only when it was getting dark, he got up and went downstairs. The aunt came out of the kitchen and said: “You can eat tomorrow, you have behaved in such a way today, that you do not deserve anything.”

Rico felt no hunger, although he had eaten nothing since morning. He had not thought of eating when he came down, so he went quite contentedly across the way into the other house, and right into the kitchen. Stineli stood by the hearth and was kindling the fire. When she caught sight of Rico, she gave a loud

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yodel, for the whole day long, since the grandmother had told her what had happened, the ground had been burning under her feet, because she could not get out to give vent to her joy; but she could not stay still for another moment. Now, she was beside herself and kept on shouting: "Now you have it! Now you have it!"

At this noise the grandmother came out of the living-room, and Rico went at once up to her and said: "Grandmother, may I go and thank the teacher, if he is ill?"

The grandmother thought for a moment, for the teacher had looked very sick in the morning; then she said:

"Wait a moment, Rico, I will go with you," and she went to put on a clean apron. Then they wandered together toward the school-house. The grandmother entered first, then Rico came softly after her, having the violin under his arm, for it had not left his hand since it belonged to him.

The teacher lay there much exhausted. Rico stepped to the bed and looked at his violin, and he could say hardly a word, but his eyes sparkled so, that the teacher must have understood him, for he cast a glad look at the boy and nodded his head. Then he beckoned

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to the grandmother to come to him. Rico stepped aside, and the teacher said with a weak voice: "Grandmother, I should very much like to have you repeat the Lord's prayer for me. I begin to feel so afraid."

At this moment the church bell was heard and Rico quickly folded his hands and the grandmother folded hers and they repeated the Lord's prayer. Then it was quite still in the room. The grandmother bent a little and closed the lids of the old teacher, for he had started for the better world. Then she took Rico's hand and went out with him.

CHAPTER VIII

On the Silser Lake



TINELI did not get her balance again during the whole week, her joy was so great, but it also seemed to her that this week was ten days longer than any other, for Sunday simply would not come.

But when it came, the golden sun shining over the autumnal heights, as she arrived with Rico under the fir-trees, then such delight took possession of Stineli that she had to jump around about the moss patches, shouting with joy, and then she sat down on the very edge of the incline, so that she could see all: the sunny heights and the lake and far beyond the blue sky.

Now she called: "Come, Rico, come here, we will sing, long, long!"

Then Rico sat down beside Stineli and tuned his violin, for of course it had been brought along. Now he began and the children sang:

"You lambkins come down
From sun-covered height—"

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They sang all the verses, but Stineli had not enough by far. "We will keep on singing," she said and sang on:

"You lambkins go over
To the joy-giving height,
The sun stands above it
The wind blows with might."

And now Rico sang the verse with Stineli and was glad and said: "Sing on, Stineli!"

Stineli became quite enthusiastic from joy and looked up and down, and sang again:

"And the lambkins, and the lambkins,
And the heaven, so blue,
And the red and white flowers
On green meadows' bright hue."

And Rico played and sang along and said: "Sing still more!"

"And a boy is so dreary
And a maiden so gay,
And one lake like the other
Their water display."

And Rico laughed too and sang and said: "Sing still more!"

Then Stineli sang once more and sang one verse after the other:

ON THE SILSER LAKE

“And the lambkins, and the lambkins
They sorrow defy,
They jump about happy
And do not know why.

“And a boy and a maiden
They sit by the lake
And were he not fretting
His heart would not ache.”

And now they began again at the beginning and sang their song from beginning to end and were greatly delighted with it, and when they had finished with it, they began afresh and again and again, and so they sang the song about ten times, all the verses, and the more they sang it, the better they liked it.

Rico then played a few melodies which he knew from his father, but after a while they came back to their song and began to sing it anew.

But sometimes Stineli stopped and cried out: “Now something comes in my thought, how you can go down to the lake, and need no money.”

Rico stopped suddenly and looked at Stineli.

“You see,” she continued excitedly, “now you have a violin and know a song. You must go in every inn or tavern to the room-door and

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sing the song and play the violin; and then the people will give you something to eat, for they will see that you are no beggar. So you can go as far as the lake, and on the homeward way you can do the same thing.”

Rico became quite thoughtful, but Stineli did not leave him time to be astonished, she wanted to sing their song again.

Because of all the singing, they did not hear the prayer-bell, and only when it began to grow dark did they think that it was time to go home, and from the distance they saw the grandmother watching anxiously for their return.

But this time Stineli was too excited to have room for care or to be subdued by it. She ran to the grandmother and cried: “You cannot believe, grandmother, how well Rico can fiddle, and now we have a song of our own, only for us. We will sing it to you directly.”

And before the grandmother could say a word, they were singing with clear voices their song, from beginning to the end accompanied by the violin. And the grandmother liked to listen to the fresh young voices. She had sat down on the stump and when the children had ended, she said: “Come, Rico, now you must play a song for me, and we will sing it together.



The grandmother liked to listen to the fresh young voices. . . .

ON THE SILSER LAKE

Do you know the song, 'I sing to Thee with heart and mouth?'"

Rico might have heard it, but he could not remember it and suggested the grandmother should sing it first, then he would softly play it after her, and then he would know it.

"Now I am to be a solo-singer with my trembling voice," said the grandmother, but she sang quite contentedly one verse to the end, and if the voice trembled a little it was quite true, and Rico could easily follow the melody, besides he had heard it before.

Now they began, and before each stanza the grandmother spoke the words to the children; and so they sang all together:

"I sing to Thee with heart and mouth
Oh Thou, my soul's desire,
I sing and make Thy name be known
On earth, and never tire.

"I know Thou art the fount of grace,
The source of life Thou art,
From which, for each, will ever flow
All strength to th' human heart.

"Why fret'st thou then in thy poor mind
And sorrow'st day and night?
Cast down thy grief before thy God,
Who made thee in His might.

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“He never yet has made mistakes
In His great government.
No, what He does, and lets be done,
For thy own good is meant.

“Then let Him rule, and further do
Whate'er He may desire,
Then thou will'st rest in peace on earth,
And joy thy soul acquire.”

“So,” said the grandmother contentedly,
“that was a real evening blessing. Now, children,
you can go to rest, and may God be with
you.”

CHAPTER IX

Mysterious Happenings



WHEN Rico came into the cottage, later than usual, for about a half hour had passed during the singing with the grandmother, the aunt came rushing toward him.

“Are you beginning already?” she shouted. “The food stood for an hour on the table, now it is put away. Go at once to your room, and if you turn out a vagabond and tramp, I am not to blame for it. I would rather do I know not what, than take care of such a boy as you are.”

Rico had never answered a word, when the aunt scolded him, but on that evening he looked at her and said: “I can go out of your way, aunt.” She pushed the bolt on the house-door so that it rang, then she rushed into her room and banged the door behind her. Rico went up to his dark room.

On the following day, when the whole large household, parents, grandmother and all the children were sitting at their supper, the aunt came rushing across and called into the room,

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asking if they knew anything of Rico, she did not know where he could be.

“He will come all right, when supper is ready,” answered the father slowly.

Now the aunt came quite into the room, for she had thought, she could just call the boy, for he must be there. She told them that he had not come for his breakfast, nor for his dinner, and he also had not slept in his bed, that was still as it was yesterday, and she believed firmly that he had gone on his loafing trips before daybreak, for the bolt had been pushed back, when she went to open the door; but she had first thought, that perhaps from annoyance she had forgotten to bolt the door, for no human being could know what she had to put up with with that boy.

“Then something has happened,” said the father at once. “He may have fallen in a crack on the mountain, that happens sometimes with such small boys who crawl about in all places. You ought to have spoken of it a little sooner,” he continued slowly, “one ought to look for him, and at night one can see nothing.”

Now the aunt began to make a terrible noise. She said, that indeed she had suspected that they were going to blame her. So it went

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always if one had had to bear so much for years and had been silent. "No one will believe," she cried—and spoke a great truth—"what a tricky, cunning, silent boy he is, and how hard he has made my life for the last four years; he will become a vagabond, a tramp and dangerous loafer."

The grandmother had long since stopped eating, had risen from the table and gone over to the aunt, who was still making a noise.

"Stop that, neighbor, stop that," the grandmother had said, before the woman obeyed. "I know Rico too; ever since the boy was brought to his grandmother, I have always known him. But if I were in your place I would not say another word, but should think whether the little fellow, who may have met with an accident, and who may be already above, standing before the dear God, whether he has to accuse no one, who in his loneliness has added great wrong to him, by giving him harsh words."

It had come a few times in the aunt's mind, how Rico had looked at her the evening before, and how he had said: "I can go out of your way." She had shouted so terribly, to quiet these thoughts. She did not dare to look at the grandmother and said that she must go.

THE STORY OF RICO

Perhaps Rico had come home, and she would have been glad to have seen him.

From that day on, the aunt said never a word against Rico in the grandmother's presence, or to anyone else. She believed, as all the rest did, that he was dead, and she was glad that no one knew what he had said to her the last evening.

In the morning after the news, Stineli's father went out in the barn, and looked for a staff; he had said that he would call a couple of neighbors; one must look for the boy, perhaps toward the Glacier, where the landslides were.

Stineli had followed him and the father said: "That is right, come, help us to seek him, you can get into the corners better than I can."

Only after a long bean stick had been found, she said: "But, father, if Rico had perhaps gone along the road, then he cannot have fallen into anything?"

"Of course he can," answered the father. "Such senseless boys get off the road and into the landslides, they themselves do not know how, and Rico was never attentive."

Stineli knew better than anyone else, that Rico was that, and from that moment a great fear came in her heart and grew with her every day, so that for fear she could neither eat nor


MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS

sleep, and did her work as if she did not know what she was doing.

Rico was not found. No one had seen anything of him. They sought no longer, and soon the people found comfort and said: "It was the best thing for the orphan, he was so forsaken and had no one."

CHAPTER X

Stineli Tells a Secret

UT Stineli grew stiller and thinner from day to day. The little children cried, "Stineli does not want to tell us stories and she never laughs now." The mother said to the father: "Don't you see? She is no longer the same." And the father said: "That's because she is growing. We must give her a little goat's milk every morning in the goat stable."

After three weeks had so passed by, the grandmother one evening took Stineli upstairs in her room and said: "See, Stineli, I can well understand that you cannot forget Rico; but you must think that the dear Lord has taken him, and if it had to be that, then it was good for Rico, we shall see it some day."

Then Stineli began to weep louder than her grandmother had ever seen the child, and kept on calling out loud: "The dear Lord has not done it, I have done it, grandmother, and therefore I feel like dying from fear, for I have put Rico up to going down to the strange lake, and

STINELI TELLS A SECRET

now he has fallen in a landslide and is dead, and it has hurt him, too, and I am to blame for it all." And Stineli wept and sobbed as if her heart would break.

A heavy load had fallen from the grandmother's heart; she had given Rico up for lost, and the painful thought had pursued her, that the little boy had run away on account of the bad treatment he had at home, and was perhaps lying in the lake, or had perished in the forest. Now, all at once, new hope came to her.

She quieted Stineli so that she could tell her the whole story about the lake, of which she had not known anything. She now learned how Rico had always talked of the lake and how he had been drawn there, and how Stineli had found the way. She was quite sure that Rico had started to go there; but the father's words about the landslide had taken all hope from Stineli.

The grandmother took the child's hand and drew her toward her. "Come, Stineli," she said lovingly, "I must explain something to you. You remember what stands in the old song which we sang with Rico the last evening:

"No, what He does and lets be done
For thy own good is meant."

THE STORY OF RICO

Do you see, although the dear God has not done it Himself as if He had let Rico die in his bed, yet the whole thing was in His hand, when you did something unwise, for He would have been able to be master over such a little Stineli. And that you have done something really foolish, you will remember your whole life long, and what may come of it, when children run out into the world and want to undertake things of which they know nothing, and never say a word of it to anyone, not to parents and not to a grandmother, who mean well with them. But now the dear God has let it be done, and we may believe for sure, that all will turn out for the best.”

“Now, Stineli, think of that, and never forget what you have learned. But, because you are sorry for it, from your heart, you may go now and pray to the dear God that He may turn to something good, the foolish thing that you and Rico have done. Then you may be joyous again, Stineli, and I am glad with you, for I believe confidently that Rico is living and that the dear God will not forsake him.”

From that day on Stineli became cheerful again, and although Rico was lacking her on every step she had no fear nor any more reproaches in her heart, and from day to day

STINELI TELLS A SECRET

she looked across to the road to see whether Rico was not coming down from Maloja. Time went by but nothing was heard of Rico.

CHAPTER XI

A Long Journey



ON that Sunday evening Rico had gone to his dark room and had sat down on a chair. He wanted to stay there until the aunt had gone to bed.

After Stineli had made the discovery how the journey to the lake could be carried out, the whole thing appeared so perfectly easy to Rico, that he began to think when it would be best for him to start; for he had a feeling that the aunt might keep him back, although he knew that she would not miss him.

When he now came home, and she went for him in such a way, he thought: "Then I'll go at once, as soon as she is in bed." As he thus sat on the chair, he thought how pleasant it would be, if he should not hear the aunt scolding for many a day, and what bunches of red flowers he would bring back for Stineli. And he saw the sunny shores and violet mountains before him, and then he fell asleep.

But he was not in a comfortable position, for

A LONG JOURNEY

he had kept the violin in his hand; so he woke again after some time, and it was still dark. Now he noticed that he was wearing his Sunday clothes, that was well; he had his cap still on his head from yesterday; so he took the violin under his arm, and he went softly down the stairs, shoved back the bolt and wandered out into the cool morning air.

It had already begun to dawn and the roosters began to crow in Sils. He marched hastily along so as to get away from the houses onto the highway. Now he was there and walked contentedly along for everything was familiar to him, he had often walked so far with his father. How far it might be, however, until he came on the Maloja, he did not know, and it seemed a great distance to him still, after he had walked continuously for two good hours.

Now gradually bright daylight came, and when he, after another good hour's walk, had arrived on the place before the inn in Maloja, where he had often looked down the road with his father, the sunny morning lay over the mountains, and the fir-trees were all as of gold. Rico sat down on the edge of the street, he was already very tired and now he realized that he had eaten nothing since his dinner on the pre-

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ceding day. But he was not dismayed, for now the road went down hill, and afterwards the lake would surely appear.

As he thus sat, a large mail-coach came rattling up. He had often seen it when it drove by Sils, and he had thought that a coachman must enjoy the greatest happiness on earth, sitting always with his whip on the box and driving fine horses. Now he saw one of those lucky creatures near by, for the mail-coach stopped and Rico did not turn his eyes from the remarkable man, who came down from his high seat, and went into the tavern and came out again with several enormous pieces of rye-bread, upon which lay a huge slice of cheese. Now the coachman pulled a strong knife out of his pocket and cut his bread and put a piece in the mouth of one horse and then the other. His turn came between, but on his piece of bread came always a good morsel of cheese. As they now were eating all together so contentedly, the coachman looked around and all at once he called out: "Hello, little musician, will you breakfast with us? Come along."

Only when Rico had seen the bread, did he realize how very hungry he was. He therefore gladly accepted the invitation and went over to the coachman. He cut an astonishingly

A LONG JOURNEY

large piece of cheese and laid it upon a still thicker piece of bread, so that Rico hardly knew how he could master the things.

He had to place his violin on the ground. The coachman watched complacently how Rico bit into his breakfast, and while he continued his business he said: "You are a very young violin player, do you know anything?"

"Yes, two songs, and then the one from father," Rico answered.

"So, and where do you want to go—on your two little legs?" the coachman continued.

"To Peschiera on the Garda Lake," was Rico's serious answer.

The coachman burst into loud laughter, so that Rico looked quite astonished up at him.

"You are a good walker, you," laughed the coachman again, "don't you know how far that is, and that a small musician, as you are, could run both his feet off together with the soles, before he would have seen one little drop of water of the Garda Lake? Who sends you down there?"

"I go myself," said Rico.

"I have never met anyone like this mite before," the coachman laughed good-naturedly.

"Where are you at home, musician?"

"I do not really know, perhaps on the

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Garda Lake," Rico answered quite seriously.

"Is that an answer!" The driver looked closer at the boy. Rico did not look like a runaway beggar child. The black curly head over his Sunday suit looked quite fine, and the small face with the serious eyes bore a noble imprint, and if one once had seen it one liked to look at it again.

The coachman may have felt that too, for he looked at Rico firmly and then again even more firmly, then he said kindly: "You carry your passport in your face, my boy, and it is a good one, although you do not know where you are at home. What will you give me if I let you sit beside me on the box and take you down?"

Rico was so astonished as if it could not be possible that he really had heard these words. To drive down into the valley on the high coach he could never have thought it possible. But what could he give the man?

"I have nothing besides my violin, and I cannot give that to you," Rico said sadly after some thinking.

"Yes indeed, I should not know what to do with that thing," the coachman laughed. "Come, now we start—and you can give me a little music."

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Rico did not trust his ears; but really the coachman lifted him over the wheels onto the high seat and climbed after! The travellers had taken to the coach again, the door was closed and now it went down the street, which Rico had so often looked at, and had longed to get down there. And his wish was fulfilled, and how! High up between heaven and earth Rico drove along and he could not yet believe that it was he.

The driver did wonder a little to whom the little boy beside him could belong.

"Tell me, you little walking possession, where is your father?" he asked after a strong crack with his whip.

"He is dead," answered Rico.

"So, and where is your mother?"

"She is dead."

"So, then one has perhaps a grandfather and a grandmother, where are they?"

"They are dead."

"So, so, but perhaps a brother or a sister you surely must have, what has become of them?"

"They are dead," was Rico's continuous, sad answer.

Since now the driver saw that all were dead he let the relations alone and only asked: "What was your father's name?"

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“Henrico Trevillo of Peschiera on Lake Garda,” replied Rico.

Now the man proceeded to arrange the things in his mind: this is a misplaced boy from down below, and it is well that he comes again to his own place. With this he dropped the subject.

When now, after the first steep descent of the mountain road, the way became a little more even, the driver said: “Well, musician, now play a cheerful song.”

Then Rico took his violin and was of such good cheer high up there on his throne, riding along under the blue sky, that he began and sang lustily,

“You lambkins come down
From sun-covered height.”

High on the postchaise sat three students, who were taking a holiday trip, and as now the song went on and Rico sang with much delight and joyousness, Stineli’s stanzas, there suddenly arose above on the coach a loud Hello and laughter, and the students called out: “Stop, musician, and begin again, we will sing with you.”

Then Rico began again and now the students joined and sang with all their might,

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“And the lambkins, and the lambkins—”

and between the singing they laughed so loud that Rico's violin could not be heard, and then they sang again, and one sang quite alone into the singing of the others:

“And were he not fretting,
His heart would not ache.”

And then the others fell in again and sang as loud as they could

“And the lambkins and the lambkins”

and so it went on for some time, and when Rico stopped for a moment, then they called to him: “Play on, do not stop,” and they threw small silver coins to him, again and again, so that he had a little heap in his cap.

Within the coach the travellers opened all the windows and stuck out their heads to hear the jolly song. Rico began to play anew and the students began afresh and divided the song into Solo and Chorus. Then the solo voice sang very solemnly:

“And one lake, like the other,
Their water display”

and then again:

“And were he not fretting,
His heart would not ache”

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and then the chorus fell in and sang with all their might,

“And the lambkins, and the lambkins”

and then it seemed they laughed as if they wanted to shorten their lives.

Suddenly the coachman stopped, it was noon and a halt had to be made and dinner had to be taken. When he swung Rico down, he carefully held his cap, for all the money was in it, and Rico had enough to do to take care of his violin.

The driver was quite happy when he gave the cap into Rico's hand, and said: “So, that is right and now you, too, can have dinner.”

The students jumped down, one after the other, and they all wanted to see the player, for they had not been able to see him well from their seats. Now the wondering and the merriment began afresh; judging from the good voice, they had expected to see a bigger man, and now the fun was doubled. They took the little boy in their midst and marched singing into the inn. Rico had to take a seat between two of the gentlemen, at the beautifully set table, and they said that he was their guest, and each of the three put a piece of meat on his plate, for none wanted to give less

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than the other, and Rico had never eaten such a meal.

“From whom do you have the beautiful song, little player?” one of the three asked.

“From Stineli, she has made it herself,” Rico answered seriously.

The three looked at each other and then burst out in ringing laughter.

“That is fine of Stineli,” one cried, “now we will give a Hurrah for Stineli.”

They drank Stineli’s health, and Rico had to clink his glass with theirs for Stineli, which he gladly did.

Now it was time to start, and when they stepped up to the coach again, a stout man came to Rico; he had such a big stick in his hand that it looked as if he had torn up a young tree. He was dressed in a yellowish-grey suit.

“Come, little one,” he said, “you have sung so prettily. I have heard you inside the coach, and I, too, have to do with sheep, like you; you see, I am a sheep trader and because you can sing so beautifully of sheep, you must have something from me.” With these words he put a large silver coin in Rico’s hand, for the cap had been emptied into Rico’s pocket.

Then the man took his seat inside the coach,

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and Rico was lifted up by the coachman like a feather and swung onto his high seat. When the coach did not go so quickly, the students asked for music, and Rico played all the melodies which he had from his father, and at last he played:

“I sing to Thee with heart and mouth.”

The students must have fallen asleep at this melody, for everything had become so quiet, and now the violin was silent, and the evening breeze wafted softly around them, and silently the little stars came up in the sky, one after the other, until they radiated round about, wherever Rico was looking. And he thought of Stineli and the grandmother, what they were doing now, and he remembered that about this time the prayer-bell was ringing, and both would pray the Lord's prayer. He would do that, too; it was then as if he were with them, and Rico folded his hands and prayed under the brilliant, star-studded heavens, very reverently, his Lord's prayer.

CHAPTER XII

A Stranger Helps the Little Wanderer

ICO too had fallen asleep. He awoke from being taken hold of by the coachman to lift him down. Now all came out and down from the coach, and the three students came to Rico and shook his hand, and wished him a happy journey. And one called out: "Greet Stineli from us most heartily!"

Then they disappeared in a street, and Rico heard how they once again began:

"And the lambkins, and the lambkins."

Now Rico stood there in the dark night and had no idea where he was nor what he should do. Now he remembered that he had not even thanked the driver, who had taken him along so far, and he wanted to do so at once.

The driver had disappeared together with the horses, and it was dark round about; only at the other side hung a lantern; Rico went toward it. It hung on the stable door, where the horses were being led in. Aside stood the man with the big stick, he seemed to wait

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for the coachman. Rico too stood there and waited.

The sheep trader could not have recognized him in the darkness; all at once he said in a surprised tone: "What, you are still here, little one? Where are you going to spend the night?"

"I do not know where," answered Rico.

"For goodness' sake! At eleven o'clock in the night and such a bit of a boy as you are, and in a strange country—"

The sheep trader had to puff out his words, for in the excitement he could not get his breath easily; but he did not complete his sentence, for the coachman came out of the stables, and Rico went directly toward him and said: "I wanted to thank you for taking me along."

"It is well that you came, I had almost forgotten you over the horses, and I wanted to give you in charge of an acquaintance. I was about to ask you, good friend," he continued, turning to the sheep trader, "whether you would not take the little fellow along, since you are going down into the Bergamask region. He is going down to Lake Garda, somewhere, he is one of those who are—hither and thither—you understand what I mean—"

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hour, the sheep-trader rose and said: “Now my turn comes, we are now in Bergamo, and you remain seated, until someone comes to fetch you, for I have arranged everything,—then you get out and are there.”

“Am I then in Peschiera on the Garda Lake?” Rico asked. His protector confirmed that. Rico now thanked the kind man very prettily, for he had indeed comprehended, how many kindnesses the man had shown him, and so they parted, and each felt sorry that he had to leave the other.

Rico now sat very quiet in his corner, and had time to be astounded, for no one troubled himself about him. He might have sat so perhaps three hours without moving, when the train again stopped as it had done several times before.

A conductor came in, took hold of Rico’s arm and pulled him hastily out of the carriage and down the steps. Then he pointed up the hill and said: “Peschiera,” and was in a moment back in the carriage and had disappeared. The train rushed on.

PART II

AT THE BEAUTIFUL GARDA LAKE

CHAPTER XIII

At the Distant, Beautiful Lake



ICO stepped a few feet away from the building where the train had stopped, and looked about: this white house, the bare, open space before it, the straight road, all appeared so strange to him; he had never seen that before, and he thought: "I am not on the right spot." Sadly he went on down the path, between the trees. The road now turned, and Rico stood as in a dream and did not stir. Before him in bright sunshine lay the light blue lake with the warm, still shores and beyond the mountains came toward each other; in the midst lay the sunny bay and the friendly houses on it shone across. Rico knew that he had seen that, there he had stood, just there, he knew these trees; but where was the small, white house? It must be there, quite near; but it was not there.

But below there was the old street; oh yes, he knew it so well, and there the large red flowers shone forth from between the green

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leaves; there must be a narrow, stone bridge, there over the outlet of the lake, he had walked over it so often; but he could not see it.

Suddenly Rico began to run up to the street, driven by ardent longing, and across it, there was the narrow bridge—he knew all—there he had gone across and somebody was holding his hand—his mother—all at once the face of his mother came before him, as he had not seen it before for many years; there she had stood and had looked at him with loving eyes; and something came over Rico as never before in his life.

He threw himself on the ground beside the narrow bridge and wept and sobbed aloud: “Mother, my mother, where are you? Where is my home, mother?” He lay there for a long time and had to weep out his great sorrow, and he felt as if his heart must burst, and as if it were an outbreak of all sorrow which had made him dumb and stiff when it had come to him.

When Rico got up from the ground, the sun was far down and a golden evening glow covered the lake. Now the mountains became violet and a rosy hue lay over the shore. Rico had thus remembered his lake and had seen it thus in his dreams, and everything was much more beautiful now he saw it again with his very eyes. Rico kept on thinking, as he was

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sitting there and looked and could not see enough: "If I could only show that all to Stineli!"

Now the sun had gone down, and the light round about turned into darkness. Rico arose and went toward the street, where he had seen the red flowers. A small path led up to them from the street. There they were, one bush beside the other, but it was like a garden; to be sure there was only an open fence round about the place, and in the garden there were flowers and trees and grapes, in profusion.

Above at the end was a handsome house, with an open door, and in the garden a young fellow went hither and thither and cut off bunches of large golden-yellow grapes here and there and whistled contentedly at his work.

Rico looked at the flowers and thought: "If Stineli could see these!" And he stood for a long time without moving before the hedge.

Now the young gardener saw him and called out to him: "Come in, fiddler, and play a pretty song, if you know one."

The boy called that in Italian, and Rico felt so strange; he understood what he heard, but he could not speak it. He stepped into the garden and the young fellow wanted to talk with him; but when he discovered that Rico

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could not answer, he pointed to the open door and made clear to Rico that he should play there.

Rico approached the door, it led directly into a room. There stood a little bed, and beside it sat a lady who was making something with red laces. Rico stopped before the threshold and began to play his song and sing:

“You lambkins come down.”

When he was through, there arose from the bed the pale head of a boy, who called out:

“Play again!”

Rico played another melody.

“Play once more!” it sounded again.

So it went on five or six times, and again and again it came from the bed: “Play again!”

Now Rico had played all he knew; he took his violin and was going away. Then the sick boy began to scream: “Stay here! Play again, play once more!” And the lady had risen and came to Rico. She gave him something in his hand and Rico at first did not know what she wanted; but it came again into his mind, that Stineli had said, if he were playing before a door, the people would give him something. Then the woman asked in a friendly tone, from where he came and where he was go-

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ing? Rico could not answer. She asked if he were there with his parents? Then he nodded "no"; whether he was alone? He nodded "yes". Where he was now going, so late in the evening? Rico shook his head uncertainly. Then the woman felt compassion for the small stranger, and she called the young fellow from the garden, and told him to go with the strange boy to the Inn "At the Golden Sun"; perhaps the landlord could understand the boy's language, for he had been travelling for a long time about the world. He was to tell the landlord that he should keep the boy over night, she would pay for it, and he was to send him tomorrow on the right way which he had to take, he was so very young—"only a few years older than my boy," she added full of pity—and he also should give him something to eat.

The little one shouted again from his bed: "He must play once more," and did not stop until his mother said: "He will come again tomorrow, but now he must sleep and so must you."

The young fellow now went ahead of Rico, and the latter knew now where he was going, he had understood the lady's words.

It was a good ten minutes' walk to the little

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town. In the middle of a narrow street the young man went into a house and directly into a large bar-room which was thick with tobacco-smoke, and a number of men sat around the tables.

The young fellow gave his message and the landlord said, "It is well," and the innkeeper's wife came at once and both looked at Rico from top to toe. But when the guests at the next table saw the violin several of them called out: "We are going to have music," and one called: "Little one, play something merry!" And they all shouted so in confusion, that the landlord could hardly ask what language Rico spoke, and from where he came. Rico now answered in his own tongue, that he had come from over the Maloja, and that he understood all that they were saying, but could not speak. The landlord understood him and said that he too had been there above, and they would talk together later, now he should play a little, for the guests kept on calling for music.

Then Rico obediently began to play as usual with his song, and sang the words. But not one of the guests understood a word, and the melody seemed, no doubt, a little simple to them. Some began to talk and to make a noise; the others called out, they

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wanted to hear something different, a dance or something pretty.

But Rico sang his song through to the end, when he once had begun it. As he had finished it, he thought of what he should play next. He did not know how to play a dance, and grandmother's song went still slower, and they could again not understand the words; then something occurred to him and he began:

“Una sera
In Peschiera—”

The first tones of the melody had hardly been played, when there was perfect silence, and all at once voices rose from this and that table and at last from all tables, and there rose a chorus more beautiful than Rico had ever heard, so that he became quite enthusiastic and played ever more fierily, and the men sang more and more eagerly, when one stanza was at an end, then Rico began at once a new one with firm strokes, for he knew, from his father, where the stanza ended. And when now the end came, there arose such a noise as Rico had never heard. Everyone in the room called and shouted in confusion, and struck their fists on the table, from pure joy, and then they all came with their glasses toward Rico and he

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was to drink from each, and two shook his hands and one his shoulders, and one and all shouted at him and made such an uproar from pure joy that the poor little boy became frightened and grew paler and paler. He had played their own Peschiera-song, which belonged to them alone and which no stranger could learn, and he, this little boy, had played it firmly and correctly, as if he belonged to Peschiera; these intense-feeling Peschierans could not emphasize enough and could not rejoice enough over this wonder of a violin-player and all wanted to show him how highly they esteemed him.

But now, the innkeeper's wife interfered. She had a plateful of rice with a large piece of chicken on it in her hand; she beckoned to Rico and told the men to leave him alone now, that he must eat and they could see that he was as white as a sheet from excitement. Then she put his plate on a small table in the corner and sat down with him and encouraged him to eat, for that would be good for such a thin little fellow as he was.

Rico found his supper very good, for since his coffee in the morning he had not had a bite, and he had been through too much to go without eating. As soon as his plate was empty, his eyes closed from fatigue. The landlord too

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had come to the table and praised Rico for his playing, and asked him, to whom he belonged and where he was going. Rico said, while he tried hard to keep his eyes open, that he belonged to no one, and he wanted to go nowhere.

Then the landlord said in a friendly way, he should go to sleep without fear, tomorrow he could go to see Mrs. Menotti again, who had sent him there; that she was a very kind lady and could perhaps employ him as a young servant, if he did not know what to do.

But his wife kept on pulling his sleeve, as if he should not say what he was saying; but he finished, for he did not understand what his wife wanted.

Now the men at the tables began again, they wanted to hear their song once more. But the landlady called out: "No, no, you can hear it again next Sunday. The boy is tired to death." With these words she took Rico by the hand and brought him upstairs to a large room. Horse-harness hung on the wall and in one corner grain lay in heaps, and in the other stood his bed. In a few minutes Rico lay in it and was fast asleep.

Later, when all was still in the house, the landlord sat at the small table where Rico had sat, and his wife stood before him, for she was


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still clearing away, and she said eagerly, "You must not send the boy to Mrs. Menotti; that is a boy I can use for all kinds of work, and have you not noticed how he can play? They all became wild over it. You take my word for it that he will be a player, better than our three, and he will learn to play dances, I tell you, then you can have him for nothing on the dance-days. You must not let the boy out of your reach; he looks nice, and I like him."

"Just as you like," said the landlord, and he could see that his wife had thought out something to their advantage.

CHAPTER XIV

Rico Makes New Friends

HE next morning the landlady stood in her doorway and made investigation about the weather and what else that might have happened over-night. The gardener of Mrs. Menotti was coming along; he was at the same time master and servant on the fruitful estate, for he liked his position as he understood garden and field work, and ruled and looked after everything.

When he stood before the landlady he said: "Mrs. Menotti wants me to tell you that, if the young musician of last night has not gone away, he shall come across to Mrs. Menotti, for her little boy wants to hear him play again."

"Oh, yes, if Mrs. Menotti is in no great hurry," the landlady said, while she put both hands on her hips, as a sign that she would not hurry. "For the present, the little musician still lies upstairs in his good bed and is still bravely sleeping and I like him to sleep. You may tell Mrs. Menotti, that I will send him now and then; that he is not going any farther,

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but that I have taken him in and have adopted him; for he is a forsaken orphan, who did not know where to go. And now he is well taken care of," she added with emphasis.

The young fellow went with his message.

The landlady let Rico finish his sleep, for she was a good-natured woman, only she thought first of her own profit, and then of that of others. When Rico at last awoke he had slept away all fatigue and came down the stairs quite refreshed. The innkeeper's wife beckoned him into the kitchen and placed a large basin of coffee on the table before him, and laid a piece of corn-cake beside it. Then she said:

"You can have it every day, if you like, and at noon and evenings, even better, for then food is prepared for the guests and there is always some left over. You can do errands for me and play the violin when it is needed, and you can be at home with us and have your own bedroom and you need not wander any more through the world. And now you can say whether you want to stay."

Rico answered quite contentedly: "Yes, I will stay," for he could say that much in the landlady's language.

She went at once over the whole house with him and through the barns and the stables and

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into the vegetable garden and the barnyard where the chicken coops were, and she explained to him the surroundings and directions, how to go to the shoemaker and the store and to other important people. Rico paid close attention, and to try him, the landlady sent Rico at once to three or four places to fetch all kinds of things such as oil, soap and thread and a mended boot, for she had noticed that Rico could speak a few words quite plainly.

Rico brought everything quite right, which pleased the landlady very much, and toward evening she said: "Now you may go with your violin to Mrs. Menotti and stay there until it gets dark."

Rico was glad of that, for he would pass the lake and afterwards be near the beautiful flowers.

Arrived at the lake, he ran to the small bridge and sat down, for there lay again all the beauty before him, the water and mountains in the golden vapor, and he could hardly get away.

But he did, because he knew that he now must do what the landlady told him to do, because he could make his home with her. When he entered the garden, the little boy

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heard him, for the door was always open, and he cried out: "Come and play again!"

Mrs. Menotti came out and shook hands with Rico and drew him into the room. It was a large room and one could see, through the wide door, directly into the beautiful garden. The bed of the sick boy stood just opposite the door, besides that there were only chairs and tables and beautifully carved boxes in the room, but no other bed, for in the evening the little bed was moved into the next room, where the mother's bed stood; and in the morning, the little bed, with the owner of it, was brought out again into the beautiful, cheerful room, where the sun threw its beaming rays on the floor every morning, and rejoiced the heart of the little boy. Beside the bed stood a pair of crutches, for from time to time the mother took the little boy out of his bed and guided him in walking on his crutches a few times up and down the room, for he could neither walk nor stand on his little legs, as he was completely paralyzed and had never been able to use them.

When Rico came to the door, the little boy raised himself by means of a cord which was hanging from the ceiling down to his bed, for he could not sit up without help. Rico came to

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the bedside and looked in silence at the little fellow. He had very thin arms and small, thin fingers, and a narrow, thin face such as Rico had never seen in a boy, and out of the face two large eyes looked piercingly at Rico, for the little boy, who saw something new and who thirsted for new things, and very seldom saw them, looked at everything that came in his lonesome path very keenly.

“What is your name?” the little boy now asked.

“Rico,” was the answer.

“And I am Silvio. How old are you?” was his next question.

“I shall soon be eleven years old.”

“And I, too, shall soon be eleven,” said the little boy.

“But, Silvio, what are you talking about,” the mother interrupted, “you are not quite four, time does not go quite so quickly.”

“Play again!” said Silvio.

The mother sat down in her seat beside the little bed and Rico went and stood a little further away and began to play. Silvio could not get enough of it, and as soon as one piece was played then his “play again” was heard.

Rico had played all his pieces about six times, when the mother went out and came

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back with a plate full of the golden yellow grapes and said that Rico must rest now and sit on her chair and eat some grapes with Silvio.

Then she went into the garden and looked after things and was glad, for she hardly ever could get away from Silvio's bed, for he could not bear it and he cried quite pitifully; so it was a real pleasure for the lady, that she could get away.

Meanwhile the two boys understood each other splendidly, for Rico could answer Silvio's questions very well and when he did not know the right word at once, then he made himself understood with signs, and that kind of conversation Silvio found most entertaining. The mother could look at her flower-beds and grape vines, and the beautiful fig trees in the fields round about, without having Silvio call her a single time.

But when now she returned and it was growing dark, Rico rose to leave. Little Silvio made a great noise and held Rico with both hands by his short coat and would not let him go if he would not promise that he would come tomorrow and every following day. But Mrs. Menotti was a cautious woman; she had indeed understood the landlady's message and she

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now quieted Silvio and promised him that she would go very soon to the innkeeper's wife and talk things over with her, for Rico could not promise anything.

At last the sick child let go of the jacket and gave his hand to Rico, although the latter did not like to leave the pleasant room, where he felt happy and where it was so still and everything looked so pretty, and where Silvio and his mother were so friendly to him.

A few days passed, when late one afternoon, Mrs. Menotti, much dressed, appeared in the "Golden Sun," and the landlady ran to meet her and conducted her to the hall upstairs. Mrs. Menotti asked very politely, whether it would not suit the landlady of the "Golden Sun" to let Mrs. Menotti have Rico a few evenings in the week; he entertained her little boy so well and she would gladly do her share in whatever the landlady wished.

The landlady was flattered that the highly-respected lady should come to ask her for a favor, and it was settled at once that Rico should come every free evening, and Mrs. Menotti, in return, undertook to supply Rico with clothes, so that the landlady was delighted with the arrangement; for now she had not to pay a cent for Rico, and everything he received

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was pure gain for her. So the two women parted, satisfied with their arrangement.

Thus the days went by for Rico. In a short time he spoke Italian as fluently as if he had always known it. And once he did know it. So he remembered one thing after another, and he had a good ear and he spoke it like an Italian, so that all people were surprised at it. The landlady could use him better than she had expected, for he attended to her business as properly and neatly, as she herself could do it, for she did not have the patience, and when something had to be prepared for a feast, perhaps a wedding, then Rico had to do it, for he knew what was beautiful and could bring it about.

When he ran his errands, he was back before the landlady thought that he had arrived at the place where he was sent, for he never wasted time in conversation. When anyone wanted to question him about himself, he turned around and walked away. This pleased the landlady particularly, when she noticed it, and gave her a great respect for the boy, so that she herself did not question him, and so it came that no one really knew, how he had come to Peschiera; but a story had spread, which everyone accepted, namely, that he, an orphan, had been

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badly treated high up in the mountains, that he had run away, and had met with many dangers on the long journey and had at last arrived where the people were not so uncouth as they were in the mountains, and that he loved to be here. And when the landlady told the story she did not forget to add that he deserved having found a home under her roof.

When the first dance-Sunday came, there assembled at the "Golden Sun" a most surprisingly large crowd, so that they did not know where to put them all, for everyone wanted to see the small musician and hear him, and those who had heard him the first evening came first of all, and wanted to begin with their song.

The landlady ran hither and thither in the ardor of work and shone, as if she herself had turned into the "Golden Sun", and when she met her husband, she said each time victoriously: "Did I not tell you so?"

Rico listened first to a dance played by the three musicians who had come, and the melody fell so in his ear and his fingers, that he could at once play with them, and now he knew the dance forever. So it came about that, late in the evening, when they stopped dancing, he

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could play all the dances with the others, for each dance had been played a number of times.

At the end, the Peschiera song had to be sung, accompanied by Rico, and if there had been a great noise the whole evening, now the hearts of the Peschierans became more and more inflamed and there was such a noise that Rico thought, "Now they will fly at each other and kill each other." But all the noise was an expression of friendship and he himself came in for such ear-splitting applause, that he kept on thinking, "If it were only over," for there was nothing more distasteful to Rico than noise.

In the evening the landlady said to her husband: "Have you seen it? Next time we shall need only two musicians."

And the husband was very contented and said: "We must give something to the boy."

Two days later there was a dance above in Desenzano, and Rico was sent there with the musicians. It was the same noise and commotion, and although the Peschiera-song was not requested, there was the same loud noise about other things, and Rico thought from beginning to end: "If it were only over!"

He brought home a whole pocketful of money; this he let roll all uncounted over the

RICO MAKES NEW FRIENDS

table, for it belonged to the landlady, and she praised him and placed a large piece of apple-cake before him. The following Sunday there was again a dance in Riva on the other side of the lake. This time Rico was glad, for Riva was the spot on the other side of the lake which looked from Peschiera like a sunny beach, with friendly white houses round about the shore, which were reflected in the lake.

The musicians went in the afternoon in an open boat over the golden lake with the blue sky above them and Rico thought, "If I could sail thus with Stineli! How astonished she would be about the lake in which she would not believe!"

But at Riva the same racket went on and Rico wished himself away again, for it was so much more beautiful to look at Riva from the other side in the quiet twilight, than to sit here in the midst of the terrible noise.

But when there was no dance-day, Rico could go every evening to little Silvio and stay for a long time, for the landlady wanted to make herself obliging to Mrs. Menotti. Rico loved to go there, that was his joy. When he passed the lake, he went to the narrow bridge and sat down on the ground for a while; for this was the only spot where he had the feeling that

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he might be at home. There he could see everything most vividly, as it used to be when he had a home. For what he saw before him, he had seen in former days, and here he could see his mother most plainly. There she had stood at the lake and had washed something, and now and then she had looked at him and said some loving words, and he sat in the same spot where he now sat. All that he remembered perfectly well. He always left there reluctantly, but he knew that Silvio was listening for his step. When he then came through the garden he felt happy again and he liked to enter the quiet, clean house. Mrs. Menotti was friendlier to him than anyone else, he felt that; she had great compassion for the forsaken orphan, as she called him, for she had heard the story of his running away. But never had she asked Rico anything about his life in the mountains, for she thought that it would only waken sad memories in him. She also felt that Rico had not the care which a little boy of his age and his quiet habits, ought to have, but she could do nothing, but have him with her as often as she could get him. She often put her hand on his head and said, full of pity:

“You poor orphan!”

Rico became, with every day, more necessary

RICO MAKES NEW FRIENDS

to Silvio. In the morning he began to lament and to call for Rico, and when he was in pain, then he screamed more, and could not be quieted, when Rico could not come. For since Rico could talk so fluently, Silvio had found a new, ever-flowing source of amusement which was the story-telling.

Rico had begun to talk of Stineli to Silvio, and since he felt happy in talking of her, he grew so lively and entertaining, that he seemed no longer the same boy. He told hundreds of stories: How Stineli once caught Sami by one leg, just when he was falling into the water-hole, and how she had to pull and pull and shout the while with all her might, while Sami shouted below until the father came along quite slowly, for he assumed that it was children's nature to scream without any need. And how she cut dolls for Peterli and made furniture for Urschli from all kinds of material, wood and moss and grasses. And how all the children called for Stineli when they were sick, because they forgot what hurt them when she entertained them. And then Rico told how he went out with Stineli, and how beautiful she was, his eyes shone so that his whole body became excited, and little Silvio also became excited and wanted to hear more. And

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when Rico stopped, then he called out, "Tell again about Stineli!" But one evening Silvio became more excited when Rico wanted to go away, and said that he could not come tomorrow, nor the day after, which was Sunday.

Silvio screamed for his mother, as if the house were on fire and he lay in the midst of the flames, and when she rushed in from the garden, he called out: "Rico must never again go to the inn, he must stay here. He must always stay here. You must stay here, Rico, you must, you must!"

Then Rico said: "I should like to, but I have to go."

Mrs. Menotti was in great perplexity; she knew indeed, what Rico was to the inn people, and that she could not get him on any condition. So she pacified Silvio as well as she could and drew Rico compassionately to her heart saying: "Oh, you poor orphan!"

Then Silvio shouted in his anger: "What is an orphan? I, too, want to be an orphan!"

But now the mother became excited and said: "Oh, Silvio, do you want to be sinful? See, dear, an orphan is a poor child who has no father and no mother and is nowhere at home in the wide world."

RICO MAKES NEW FRIENDS

Rico had riveted his dark eyes on Mrs. Menotti, they looked blacker and blacker; but she did not notice it. She had forgotten Rico, when she, in her excitement, explained to Silvio. Rico crept softly out and away. Mrs. Menotti thought that he had gone so softly, so that he would not excite the little boy, and she was satisfied. She sat down by the little bed and said: "Listen, Silvio, I will explain it to you, and then you must not make this noise again. See, my boy, one cannot take boys away, for if I wanted to take Rico from the innkeepers, then they could come and take my Silvio. Then you could never again see the garden and the flowers and must sleep alone in the room where the harness hangs, and where Rico does not like to go; he has often told you that. What would you then do?"

"Come home again," was Silvio's decisive reply, but nevertheless he kept quiet and lay down.

Rico went through the garden, and over the street down to the lake. There he sat down in his little spot and laid his head in his hands and said with a comfortless voice: "I know now, mother; I am nowhere at home in this whole world."

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And thus he sat in his great sadness till late in the night, and would have preferred to stay there, but he had finally to return to his bedroom.

CHAPTER XV

Silvio's Mother Makes a Promise



UT in little Silvio the excitement worked on and when he now knew that Rico would not come for two days in succession, he began to call out early in the morning: "Now Rico is not coming! Now Rico is not coming!" and continued calling with short pauses between, until evening. And the next morning early, he began again. But this activity had used him up so that on the third day he was like a little heap of straw, which a spark could bring into bright flames.

Rico appeared toward evening still disgusted from the noises of the dances, where he had played. Since he now knew that he was nowhere at home, the thought of Stineli had received new power and he said to himself: "There is only Stineli in the whole world to whom I belong, and who troubles herself about me." And there came over him a great longing for Stineli. He hardly sat by Silvio's bed, when he said: "Do you see, Silvio, only with

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Stineli one feels happy and nowhere else.” These words were hardly uttered when the little fellow pulled himself up on his cord and shouted with all his might: “Mother, I want Stineli, Stineli must come. One feels happy only with Stineli and nowhere else in the whole world!”

The mother came in, and since she had often listened with much satisfaction to Rico’s story of Stineli and her small sisters and brothers, she knew whom this outburst concerned, and said: “Yes, indeed, I should be glad, for I could use a little Stineli for you and myself, if I only had one!”

But Silvio did not accept such uncertain utterances, he was all fire and flame for his wish.

“Now you can have one at once,” he cried, “Rico knows where she is, he must fetch her; I will have Stineli, every day and always. Rico must get her tomorrow, he knows where she is.”

When the mother found that Silvio had thought everything out and wanted to take the thing quite seriously, she began to turn his mind to something else, for she had heard several times of the many unheard-of dangers Rico had to overcome on his journey, and how

SILVIO'S MOTHER MAKES A PROMISE

it was looked upon as a great wonder that he had reached Peschiera alone, and what a terrible wild people were living up there in the mountains. So she knew that no human being could fetch down such a maiden and least of all, a tender boy like Rico; he might perish miserably if he were to try such a thing, and then she would have the responsibility of it, and that she could not and would not have, for she had already enough.

She presented to Silvio the impossibility of the whole thing and talked to him of all kinds of terrible occurrences and vicious people who might pursue Rico and kill him. But it was all of no use. Little Silvio had fixed the idea firmly in his head as never anything before in his life; for whatever the mother could say and however eagerly she talked from fear, as soon as she stopped, Silvio said: "Rico must get her, he knows where she is."

Then the mother said: "And if Rico knows, do you think that he would run into danger and temptation, when he can have things as he has, and need not go to wicked people?"

Then Silvio looked at Rico and said: "Will you go and fetch Stineli, Rico, or will you not?"

"Yes, I will," Rico answered firmly.

"Oh, dear heavens, now Rico too becomes

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senseless!" cried the mother in terror. "Then I know no help. Take the violin, Rico, and play and sing something, I must go into the garden." With these words Mrs. Menotti ran hastily out under the fig trees, for she thought that Silvio would then forget his idea quickly, when he could not tease something from her.

But the two good friends within did neither play nor sing; but talked each other into a perfect fever with all kinds of projects, how Stineli could be fetched and how things would turn out afterwards, when she was there. Rico forgot entirely to go home, although it had become quite dark, for Mrs. Menotti purposely did not come into the house, she was hoping that Silvio would fall asleep. At last she came in and Rico went at once, but she had a hard battle with Silvio. He refused absolutely to close his eyes until his mother would promise that Rico must fetch Stineli, and that she could not do, and so Silvio came to no rest until the mother said: "Be contented, everything will be arranged over night." For she thought that he would forget his wish over night, as he usually did and something new would come into his mind.

Then Silvio grew still and fell asleep. But the mother had reckoned wrong. She was not

SILVIO'S MOTHER MAKES A PROMISE

quite awake, the next morning, when Silvio called out of his bed: "Is everything arranged, mother?"

Since she could not assure him that it was, such a storm started as she had never experienced before with the little boy, and it went on until late in the evening, and the morning after Silvio began again where he had left off the night before.

Silvio had never yet shown such a persistency in the same wish. When he screamed and lamented she could bear it, but when the hours of his pain came, then the poor little chap whimpered and moaned pitifully: "Only with Stineli one feels well, and nowhere else!"

This pierced the mother's heart and it seemed to her like an accusation, just as if she would do nothing that could help him to feel well; but how could she think of such a thing, when she herself had heard Rico answer Silvio's question, "Do you really know the way to Stineli?" "No, I do not know the way, but I shall find it."

She hoped from day to day that through some happy event a new demand would come into Silvio's head, for it always had been so, she could depend usually on that: if he had demanded something when he felt well, then he

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surely would not wish it as soon as his pains came. But this time it was different, and there was a good cause for it. Rico's stories and expressions about Stineli had created, in the susceptible mind of the little boy, the belief that nothing would hurt him any more, as soon as Stineli should be with him. Therefore Silvio acted more and more pitifully from day to day and his mother did not know where she could find counsel and help.

CHAPTER XVI

The Minister Finds a Way



IN this state of unrest, it was for Mrs. Menotti a real comfort, when she, after a long time, saw the well-meaning old pastor in his long black coat, coming into the garden, who now and then came to visit the little sick boy. She jumped up from her chair and exclaimed joyfully: "Look, Silvio, there comes the good pastor!" and she went to meet him. But Silvio, in his anger with everything cried out as loud as he could, after his mother: "I would rather Stineli would come!"

But then he hastily crawled beneath his cover, so that the reverend gentleman should not know from where the voice came. The mother was much frightened and begged the pastor, on stepping into the house, not to take the reception amiss, it was really not intended seriously. Silvio did not stir, he only said quite softly beneath his cover, "Yes, indeed, I mean it."

The pastor must have guessed from where

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the voice came; he stepped at once up to the bed, and although not a hair could be seen of Silvio, he said: "Good for a greeting, my son, how goes it with your health, and why do you hide in your subterranean hole like a small badger? Come out and explain to me, what you know about Stineli?"

Now Silvio crawled out, for he had respect for the reverend gentleman, since he was now so near to him. He quickly held out his thin hand to him for greeting and said, "Rico's Stineli."

Now the mother had to explain, for the pastor shook his head, surprised, while he sat down at Silvio's bed. She told him the whole affair and about Stineli, and how the small Silvio had got it in his head that he never would be contented again if Stineli did not come to him, and how Rico too had become unreasonable about it and thought that he could fetch the girl although he did not know the way, and she lived far away in the mountains where no one could get, and one did not know what terrible people lived up there, for one could fancy what kinds of things must happen there, if a tender boy like Rico had rather face the greatest dangers than to stay among such people. If everything were different, Mrs. Menotti

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added, then no money would be too much to let a girl like Stineli come, to satisfy Silvio's longings and to have someone for him, for what she had to bear often seemed too much for her, and she thought that she could not stand it much longer.

And Rico, who otherwise talked so sensibly, thought no one could help her so well as this Stineli. He must know her well, and if the girl was as he described her, then it might be a salvation for a girl, if she should come away from there above; but she knew of no one who could do her such a service.

The parson had listened very seriously and had said never a word, until Mrs. Menotti had finished. He could not very well have put in a word, for she had not opened her heart for a long time, and it had been so full, and Mrs. Menotti, from the pressure of words, had almost lost her breath.

When all was quiet, the old gentleman first added another snuff to one before; then he said very slowly: "Hm, hm, Mrs. Menotti, I almost think that you have an opinion of the people among the mountains, which is almost too terrifying; there are also Christians, and since one has invented all kinds of means to travel, it will be possible for one to get up there

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without danger. One can find that out; it has to be planned.”

Here the gentleman had to fortify himself with another snuff, then he added: “There are all kinds of traders, who come from above to Bergamo; sheep-traders and horse-traders, who must know the way. One can make inquiries, and then one can decide; means will be found. If you care much for it, Mrs. Menotti, then I will look around; I go once or twice every year to Bergamo, so I could manage the thing a little.”

Mrs. Menotti was so grateful, that she did not know how to express it to the pastor. All at once the sad thoughts which had oppressed her for so many days and nights, and in which she had become so entangled that she could not see a way out of it, had all been taken from her. The old gentleman had taken the whole burden on himself, and she could, from now on, direct Silvio to him.

Silvio, during the whole conversation had almost pierced the pastor with his gray eyes. When the latter now rose, and offered his hand to the child, Silvio put his so strongly into the gentleman's as if he would say with this: “This time I mean it!” The pastor promised to report, as soon as he had made his inquiries

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and knew whether the thing could be carried out, or whether Silvio had to give up his desire.

The weeks passed one after the other but Silvio behaved himself well. He had a fixed hope before him, and moreover Rico had become all at once more entertaining and lively than ever before. It had hit him like a kindling gleam of joy, when he heard the decision of the reverend gentleman; and since then, new life had sprouted in him. He told Silvio more than ever, and when he took his violin, he played such heart-refreshing tunes and melodies, that Mrs. Menotti did not wish to leave the room, and she could not stop wondering where Rico got all this music.

Rico had only real joy in playing in this home; it sounded so beautiful in this large, high room, and it was so still and airy and there was no tobacco smoke and no human tumult, and he need not play just the dances, he could play what gave him joy. Rico loved this house better every day and often when he entered it he thought: "Someone who comes home feels, no doubt, as I do when I come into this room." But yet he was not at home here. He only could come for a few hours, and then he had to leave again.

Something had come up in Rico which set

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the innkeeper's wife often to wondering. When she placed the dirty, broken garbage-basin before him and said: "Here, Rico, take that to the chickens!"—he went a little to one side, placed his hands on his back as a sign that he would not touch the basin and said quietly: "I should prefer that someone else would do that." And when she brought out the old shoes and wanted to put them into Rico's hand, to take them to the shoemaker, Rico did the same thing and said: "I should prefer someone else should go there."

But the landlady was a wise woman and had her eyes in her head to see what was going on, and it had not escaped her, how Rico had changed, and how he looked. Mrs. Menotti had always dressed him well since she had undertaken to do so; but since everything looked well on Rico and he looked always more and more like a gentleman's son, Mrs. Menotti found pleasure in him and dressed him in good material, and Rico took great care with his clothes for he liked everything that was pretty and fine, and he despised dirt and disorder as he did the noise. The landlady saw all this, and added to that, she knew well that Rico, just as he had done the first time, when he returned from the dances in the neighborhood, emptied

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his pocket and let the money roll on the table without showing that he even wished for any of it.

And he brought always more, for he was not only a dance-fiddler like the others, but the people wanted always to hear his songs after the dancing, and all kinds of melodies which he knew. Therefore the landlady was anxious to keep Rico in good humor, and she did not trouble him any more with the hens and the old shoes.

Three years had passed since Rico had arrived at Peschiera. He was now fifteen years old, a tall boy, and whoever looked at him was delighted with him.

The autumnal golden sun was shining again over the Garda Lake and the blue heavens lay on the peaceful flood. In the garden, the grapes hung like gold from their branches, and the red oleander flowers shone in the bright sunshine. In Silvio's room it was quite still, for the mother had gone into the garden to fetch grapes and figs for the evening. Silvio was listening for Rico's step, for it was the time when he usually came. Now the gate in the fence opened; Silvio rose on his cord like a shot. A long black coat came wandering up the path. It was the pastor. Silvio did not hide this

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time; he stretched out his hand as far as he could, toward the pastor, long before the latter had reached the house. This reception pleased the old man. He entered the room at once and came to Silvio's bed, although he saw the mother behind in the garden, and he said: "So, it is right, my son, and how is your health?"

"Good," answered Silvio quickly. He looked with intense eagerness at the old gentleman and then asked in a low voice: "When can Rico go?"

The old pastor sat down by the bed and said with a solemn voice: "Tomorrow at five, Rico will start on his journey, my little son."

Mrs. Menotti had just entered, and now there began a questioning and surprise on her part, so that the pastor had trouble in quieting her, in order that he might explain his report without being interrupted. He succeeded at last, and Silvio held his eyes fixed on him like a little sparrow-hawk, when he told his story.

The pastor was just coming from Bergamo, where he had spent two days. There he had, with the help of his friends, found a horse-trader, who had come every autumn to Bergamo for the last thirty years, and knew every road and region from there to far over the mountains, where Rico had to go. He also

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knew how one could get into the mountains without getting out of the train and to sleep on the way. He himself was making the same tour and would take Rico along, if he could arrive in Bergamo tomorrow morning with the first train. The man knew also every driver and conductor and would surrender and recommend Rico and his companion to these people, so that they would travel safely. So the pastor thought that Rico could go in peace and he gave his blessing for the journey.

But when he stood already at the garden gate, Mrs. Menotti, who had accompanied him, turned back once more and asked, full of anxiety: "Oh, reverend friend, are you sure that there is no danger on this journey; or that Rico could be lost, and then would have to wander about in the wild mountains?"

The pastor calmed her again, and she now went back and considered all that had to be done for Rico. He was coming into the garden and the joyous shouts which Silvio sent out to him were so surprising that Rico was beside Silvio's bed in three jumps, to see what had happened.

"What is it? What is it?" Rico kept on asking, and Silvio in fear that his mother would get ahead of him, kept on shouting: "I will tell

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it! I will tell it!" But the mother let the boys alone with their joy and went after her business for that was now the most important. She brought out a travelling bag and stuffed in the bottom an enormous piece of smoked beef and half a loaf of bread, and a large package of dried plums and figs, a bottle of wine well rolled in a cloth, and then came the clothes: two shirts, two pairs of stockings and a pair of shoes and handkerchiefs, and in doing this Mrs. Menotti felt as if Rico was going to a distant part of the globe, and she now only felt how dear Rico was to her, so that she could hardly live without him.

Between the packing she had again and again to sit down and think: "If only nothing happens to him!" She came down with the bag, and she told Rico to go at once to the Inn and to explain everything fully to the landlady and ask her to let him go, and he could take the bag along and leave it at the station.

Rico was greatly surprised at his baggage; but he did obediently as he was told, and then went to the landlady. He told her that he must go up in the mountains to fetch Stineli, and it came from the pastor, that he had to start the very next morning at five o'clock.

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That the pastor had to do with this journey awoke some respect in the landlady. But she wanted to know who Stineli was, and what she intended to do; she thought at once that this might be something for her. But she only learned, that Stineli was a girl whose name was Stineli and that she was coming to Mrs. Menotti. Then she dropped the subject for she would not interfere with Mrs. Menotti's doings; she was contented enough that she had let her have Rico so long. She also assumed that Stineli was Rico's sister, only he did not say so, as he never had said anything about his family.

And so she told all the guests who came to the Inn that evening, that Rico was going tomorrow into the mountains to fetch down his sister, for he had learned how good people were here in Peschiera.

But she wanted to show how good she was to Rico. She fetched a large basket down from the attic and filled it with sausages and cheese, eggs and slices of bread with butter a finger thick between them.

“You must not be hungry on your journey, and the rest you can use there among the mountains, you will not find too much there, and you need something for your return jour-

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ney. For you are surely coming back, Rico, are you?"

"Indeed, I am," said Rico, "I shall be back in a week."

He carried his violin to Mrs. Menotti, for he would not entrust it to anyone else, and now he took leave for eight days, for he could be back in that time, if everything went well.

CHAPTER XVII

Back Over the Mountains



IN the morning, long before five o'clock, Rico was at the station, ready for his journey, and could hardly wait until the train took him on. Now he was in the car as he was three years ago, but no longer pressed timidly in the corner of the seat; now he needed a whole seat, for beside him lay his bag and basket. In Bergamo he met, as arranged, the horse-trader, and now they travelled on together undisturbed in the same car, then over the lake. Then they got out and walked toward an inn, where the horses stood ready harnessed to the large post-chaise.

Rico remembered distinctly how he had stood here in the night, quite alone, after the students had gone, and on the other side he saw the stable door, where he had seen the lantern hanging and then had again found the sheep-trader. It was already evening and they soon mounted the postchaise, and drove toward the mountains. This time Rico sat with

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his companion inside the coach, and he had hardly sat down in the corner when his eyes closed, for from excitement he had not slept an hour the night before. Now he made up for it. Without wakening once, Rico slept on until the sun stood high in the heavens and the coach went very slowly, and when he put his head out of the window, Rico saw, to his indescribable surprise, that the coach was going up the zigzag road which led up the Maloja, which he knew well.

He could not see much from the window, only now and then a turn of the highway; and he would like to have seen all round about. Now the coach stopped, they had reached the top. There was the inn, there he had sat down near the road and had talked with the coach-driver. All travellers got down for a moment, while the horses were fed. Rico too got out of the coach; he went to the driver and asked him quite humbly: "May I not sit on the box with you, as far as Sils?"

"Get up," said the coachman.

All travellers took their seats again, and now it went downward in a merry trot along the smooth road. Now came the lake. There was the wood-covered peninsula, and on the other side was Sils-Maria. The little church

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shone in the morning sun, and there toward the mountain he saw the two small houses.

His heart began to beat very strongly. Where could Stineli be? Only a few more steps and the postchaise stopped. They were in Sils!

Stineli had experienced many a hard day since Rico's disappearance. The children grew and there was always more to be done, and most of the work fell on Stineli, for she was the oldest of the children. So everyone said: "Stineli can do that, she is old enough," and then at once after: "Stineli can do that, for she is still young." She could not share joy with anyone, since Rico had gone, if she had had a moment's time for joy.

A year ago, the good grandmother had died, and from then on, there was not a free moment any more for Stineli; for there was so much work from morning until evening that it was never finished, but was always just in the midst of it.

But Stineli had not lost her good courage, although she had mourned very much for the grandmother, and she thought every day several times, without grandmother and Rico the world was no longer as beautiful as it had been. On a sunny Saturday morning, she was coming

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with a large bundle of straw on her head, from behind the barn; she wanted to make straw whisks to sweep with in the evening. The sun was shining brightly on the dry road to Sils and she stopped and looked across. A young fellow was coming along the road. She did not know him; that was no Silser, she could see that at once. And as he came nearer, he stopped, and looked at Stineli and she looked at him and was much surprised, but all at once Stineli threw down her bundle of straw and ran toward the young fellow, crying: "Rico, oh, Rico, is it you? Are you still living? Is it really you and you have come back? But you have grown, I did not know you at first; but when I looked in your face, I knew you at once! No one has a face like you!"

And Stineli stood before her friend, red as fire from joy, and Rico was as white as snow from inner excitement and could not speak at first and only looked at Stineli. Then he said: "You too have grown, Stineli, but else you are still as you used to be. The nearer I came to the house, the greater grew my fear that perhaps you had changed."

"Oh, Rico, that you are here again!" rejoiced Stineli. "Oh, if Grandmother knew it! But you must come in, Rico, how surprised they

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all will be!" Stineli ran ahead and opened the door and Rico went in. The children hid at once always one behind the other, and the mother rose and greeted Rico like a stranger and asked what he would like to have. Neither she nor one of the children had recognized him.

"Do you not all know him?" Stineli broke forth. "It is Rico!"

Now the wondering began on all sides, and they were still at it when the father entered, for his midday meal.

Rico went to meet him and offered his hand. The father took it and looked at the young fellow. "Is it perhaps one of our cousins?" the father asked, for he did not know his relatives very well.

"Now father does not know him either," said Stineli, a little aroused. "Don't you know him? It is Rico, father!"

"Well, well, that is good," remarked the father and looked at him from head to foot, then he added, "you may show yourself, have you learned some kind of a trade? Come sit down with us, then you can tell how things have gone with you."

Rico did not sit down at once, he kept on looking at the door; at last he asked hesitatingly: "Where is Grandmother?" The father

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answered that she was lying in Sils, not far from the old teacher. Rico had hesitated to put the question, because he feared the answer, since he saw the grandmother nowhere. Now he sat down with the rest, but he was very quiet for some time, and he could not eat; he had loved the grandmother.

But now the father wanted to hear the story, where Rico had gone on that day when they had searched for him in the mountains. Then Rico told all that he had experienced and came to talk of Silvio and Mrs. Menotti and now explained clearly why he had come, and that he wanted to return to Peschiera with Stineli as soon as the parents would allow it. Stineli opened her eyes wide while Rico told his story. She had not heard a word of all this. Her heart burned with joy: to go with Rico to his lake and be again together with him every day and with the good lady and Silvio who wanted her.

The father was silent for some time, for he never was over-hasty. Then he said: "It is right, that one should go among strangers, she learns something, but Stineli cannot go, it cannot be thought of. She is necessary at home; another can go, perhaps Trudi."

"Yes, yes, that is better," said the mother,

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“I cannot do without Stineli.” Then Trudi lifted up her head and said: “I should like it, for with us there is nothing but screamings of the children.”

Stineli did not say a word; she only looked eagerly at Rico, to see whether he would not say anything more, since father had refused so decidedly, and whether now he would take Trudi back with him. But Rico looked fearlessly at the father and said:

“That will not do. The sick Silvio will have no one else but Stineli, and he knows what he wants. He would just send Trudi back again, and then she would have made the journey for nothing. And Mrs. Menotti has told me that, if Stineli got on well with Silvio she could send every month five florins home, if you should wish it, and that Silvio and Stineli will get on together I am as sure of as if I saw it already with my own eyes.”

When the father was through with eating, he put his plate aside and put on his cap. For hard thinking he liked to have his cap on his head, as if the cap could keep his thoughts together.

Now he thought within himself, how hard he had to work before he could get one florin, and then he said to himself: “Five florins without

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moving a finger." Then he pushed the cap to the other side of his head, and then back again, and then he said: "She can go, another child can do something, too."

Stineli's eyes shone, but the mother looked, sighing, at the many heads and plates, for who was to help keep these all clean? And Trudi pushed Peterli with her elbow and said, "Do sit still for once," although he was quietly eating his beans.

But the father once more pushed his cap, something had come into his mind. "But Stineli is not yet confirmed," he said. "She will have to be confirmed."

"I am going to be confirmed only two years from now," said Stineli eagerly. "I can very well go away for the two years and then come back home again." That was a good way out of the difficulty, and they all were contented. The father and the mother thought, if everything went wrong without Stineli, then it would be only for a time, and that would pass and afterward she would be there again, and Trudi thought: "As soon as she is back again, then I will go and then they will see who comes back." But Rico and Stineli looked at each other and bright joy shone from their eyes.

Since the father now looked upon the thing

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as decided, he rose from the table and said: "They may go tomorrow, then one knows what one has to do." But the mother began to lament and said that must not be so soon, and she kept on lamenting until the father said: "Then they may go Monday," but he did not wish to delay, because he thought that the lamenting would continue until parting had taken place.

There was much to be done by Stineli, Rico understood that, and he turned to Sami and said to him that he wanted to see whether things had changed in Sils-Maria; and then he had to fetch a bag and a basket from Sils, Sami could help him carry them. So they started out. Rico stopped before his former home first and looked at the old house-door; all was the same. He asked Sami whether the aunt was still living there all alone. But the aunt had long since gone away, high up to Silvaplana, and no one had seen her again, for she never came to Sils-Maria. In the house lived people of whom Rico knew nothing. Everywhere he went with Sami before the old, well-known houses and also before the barns, people stared at him, but not a single person recognized him. When they went to Sils toward evening, Rico turned into the churchyard; he

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wanted to go to the grandmother's grave, but Sami did not know exactly which it was.

Loaded with bag and basket, the two returned when it began to be dark. Stineli stood at the well and was cleaning the feeding pail for the last time, and when Rico stood beside her, she said with beaming eyes: "I cannot yet really believe it, Rico!"

"But I can," said the latter so firmly that Stineli looked at him, much surprised. "But do you know, Stineli," he added, "you have not had to think of it so long as I."

Stineli was surprised several times more that Rico could say anything so decidedly; she had not known that in him formerly.

A bed had been arranged for Rico in the attic room; up there he took his things, for he did not want to unpack until tomorrow. When now, on the following morning, on the bright, beautiful Sunday, all sat around the table, Rico came and shook such a heap of plums and figs before Urschli and Peterli as they had never seen in their whole life; and they never had tasted figs; and he placed his quantity of meat and sausages and eggs in the middle of the table. And after the great astonishment had passed, there began a great feast in the cottage.

CHAPTER XVIII

Two Happy Travellers



HE journey had to begin Monday toward evening. So the horse-dealer had told Rico and he now knew his road perfectly. So, after the leave-taking was over, Rico and Stineli wandered toward Sils, and at the little house stood the mother and all the little children around her and looked after them. Sami walked beside them and carried the bag on his head, and the basket was carried by Rico on one side and Stineli on the other. Stineli's clothes had just filled it.

Near the church in Sils, Stineli said: "If Grandmother could only see us. Let us take leave from her, will you, Rico?" He was ready and told Stineli that he had already been there but could not find her; but Stineli knew where the grandmother slept.

When the postchaise drove up and stopped, the coachman called out: "Are the two here who have to go to the Garda Lake? I have already asked yesterday for them."

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The horse-dealer had well recommended them, and now the driver called out: "Up here, the others are frozen, the coach is full, you are young." Then he helped them on the seat behind the box, up high on the coach, took a heavy horse-cover and covered and stuffed it around the two, so that they sat there closely enveloped; and then the coach started.

Rico and Stineli sat alone together for the first time since they had met again, and now they could talk to each other undisturbed of all that they had lived through in the three years. In the morning they came on the lake and just about the same time that Rico had arrived at Peschiera they also arrived, and they came down the road toward the lake. But Rico did not want Stineli to see the lake until they had come to his little spot, so he led her between the trees, until all at once they came out near the narrow bridge and stepped into the open.

There the lake lay in the evening sunshine and Rico and Stineli sat down on the low hillside and looked across. The lake was as Rico had described it, but much more beautiful, for Stineli had never seen such colors. She looked hither and thither at the violet mountains and on the golden water and, full of delight, she

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exclaimed at last: "It is much more beautiful than the Silser Lake."

But Rico had never seen it so beautiful as it was today, as he sat there with Stineli. Rico had another joy—how he would surprise Silvio and his mother! No one had thought that he could be back so soon. No one expected him back before a week, and now they already sat by the lake. They remained sitting there until the sun went down. Rico had to tell Stineli where his mother stood when she was washing in the lake and he sat there and waited for her, and he had to tell her how they came over the narrow bridge and she was holding his hand.

"But where did you go then?" Stineli asked. "Have you never found the house into which you went?"

Rico shook his head. "When I go toward the railroad, then it seems to me all at once, as if I had stood there with mother and I had sat on a step and before us the red flowers; but there is nothing more now, and I do not know the road, I have never seen it."

At last they got up and went toward the garden. Rico carried the bag and Stineli the basket. When they stepped into the garden, Stineli had to exclaim exultantly: "Oh, how beautiful! Oh, the beautiful flowers!"

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Then Silvio lifted himself up like a feather. He shouted with all his might: "Rico is coming with Stineli!"

The mother thought that he had fever; she threw down her things into the chest in which she was rummaging, and came running in.

At the same moment the living Rico stepped in the doorway, and the fright and the joy almost knocked the good woman over, for up to this moment she had had the worst secret misgivings that the journey might cost Rico's life.

From behind Rico a girl came forth with such a friendly face that it at once won the lady's heart, for she was a woman of sudden impulses. But first she had to shake Rico's hands almost from their wrists for joy, and during this Stineli went quickly to Silvio's bed and greeted him, and she put her arm around the little fellow's narrow shoulders and laughed friendly into his face, just as if they had known each other for a long time and had loved each other, and Silvio put his hand around her neck and drew her face down on his. Then Stineli put a present on Silvio's bed which she had put in her pocket to have it handy. It was a work of art, which Peterli had always liked better than any other toy: a fir cone, between the hard projections

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little wires were stuck, at the end of each was a little figure cut out of thin wood. All these little figures floundered against each other and bowed to each other, and had such fiery faces, made with red chalk and coal, that Silvio could not stop laughing.

During this, the mother had heard from Rico all necessary to assure her that he was back again, safe and sound, and now she turned to Stineli and greeted her with the greatest friendliness, and Stineli answered more with her friendly eyes than her mouth, for she knew no Italian, and she had to use the few Italian words she knew, the best she could. But she was bright and knew how to help herself and if she did not know the word then she made all kinds of signs with her fingers, which Silvio found unspeakably amusing, for it was like a game, where something had to be guessed all the time.

Now Mrs. Menotti went to the chest where everything was ready for a meal: plates and tablecloth, and cold chicken, and the fruit and a bottle of wine. As soon as Stineli noticed this she ran at once after Mrs. Menotti and carried everything to the table, and was so astoundingly quick that Mrs. Menotti had nothing more to do, but to watch in surprise;

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and before she had time to think, Silvio had everything on his tray, cut up and laid ready and quite properly, as it ought to be, and such quick service much pleased our Silvio.

Then Mrs. Menotti sat down and said: "It is long since things went so well with me, but now come, Stineli, and sit down and eat with us."

Now all ate joyously together, just as if they had always belonged together and always would stay together. Then Rico began to report of the journey, and the while Stineli got up and cleared everything away again into the chest, where everything had its place. Then she sat down quite close to Silvio's bed and made figures with her nimble fingers, so that the shadow fell upon the wall, and every moment Silvio laughed a clear laugh and called out: "A hare! An animal with horns! A spider with long legs!"

Thus the evening went by so quickly and happily that when the clock struck ten no one could understand where the time had gone. Rico rose from the table, he knew that now he must go; but it seemed as if a black cloud had come over his face. He said curtly: "Good night!" and went out. But Stineli followed him, and at the garden gate she took his hand



*Then she . . . made figures with her nimble fingers so that the shadow
fell upon the wall. . . .*

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and said: "Now, Rico, you must not be sad, it is so beautiful here, I cannot tell you how much I like it, and I am so glad. And for all this I have to thank you. And you will come tomorrow and every day. Aren't you glad, Rico?"

"Yes," he said, and looked at Stineli quite gloomily, "and every evening, when it is most beautiful I have to go away, and I belong to no one."

"Oh, Rico, you must not think so," encouraged Stineli, "we always belonged together, and I have looked forward, for three years, to when we should again be together, and sometimes things went on at home when I would rather not be there; then I thought, 'if I could only be once more with Rico, then I would gladly do everything.' And now everything has come so that I could know no greater joy, and you will not be glad with me, Rico?"

"Yes, I will," said Rico, and looked at Stineli with brighter eyes. He did, after all, belong to someone, Stineli's words had brought back his balance. They shook hands once more, and Rico went out of the garden.

When Stineli returned to the room and wanted to bid Silvio good night, then a new battle had to be fought; he did not want to let

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her leave him and kept on calling: "Stineli must stay with me and always sit by my bed, she says such funny words and laughs with her eyes." Nothing could be done, until the mother finally said: "All right, hold Stineli by her dress, the whole night, so that she cannot sleep, then she will be ill tomorrow, as you are, and cannot get up, and you will not see her for a very long time."

Then Silvio let go of Stineli and said: "Go, Stineli, and sleep; but come again tomorrow very early."

Stineli promised that; and now Mrs. Menotti showed Stineli a nice, clean bedroom, which looked out on the garden, from which a sweet odor of flowers came through the open window.

From day to day Stineli became more and more indispensable to Silvio; if she went only out of the door, he considered it a misfortune. But then he behaved always properly and well when she was with him, and did everything that she asked him to do, and did not torment his mother any more. It also seemed as if the nervous little boy, since Stineli's arrival, had lost all his pains, for up till now he had not lamented once since she sat by his bed, and yet many a day had passed since the first evening when she had appeared.

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But Stineli had an inexhaustible fund of entertainment, and all that she took in her hand, and what she did and said, became a pleasant pastime for Silvio, for Stineli, from a little girl on, had had to look after little children and had to think always, to keep them satisfied with words and hands and looks and in every way and motion.

So Stineli was, in her existence and whole manner, unconsciously to herself, the most agreeable entertainment which could be found for a sensitive little boy who was confined to his bed. The clever little Stineli had soon learned all Silvio's words, and talked with Silvio undismayed in Italian, and when she turned her words in the wrong places then Silvio thought that a capital joke, and the whole thing seemed planned to give him pleasure.

The mother could never see Rico enter the garden without running to meet him, for now she could run wherever she wanted to, and whenever she wanted, and she had to take him aside to tell him what a treasure he had brought into the house, how happy and joyful little Silvio was, as never before in his life, and how she could not comprehend that such a girl could have been found on earth. For, with Silvio she was like a child, just as though she herself had

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the greatest joy in the things which gave pleasure to the little boy; and with her she could talk as sensibly, and had such experience in work and in arranging things, as hardly a married woman had. And since she had this Stineli in the house, everything was going as of itself, and she had Sunday every day. In short, Mrs. Menotti could not find words enough to admire and praise Stineli in all her characteristics, and Rico loved to listen to her praise.

When then they all sat together within, and one looked at the other always friendlier, just as though none wanted to leave the other any more, then one would have thought that they were the happiest people far and near. But with every evening the cloud on Rico's face became darker and blacker, the moment the clock struck ten, and although Mrs. Menotti in her happy mood did not notice it, yet Stineli saw it and secretly she was troubled and thought: "It is as if a thunderstorm wants to break forth."

CHAPTER XIX

Clouds on the Garda Lake



HERE came a beautiful autumnal Sunday, and across the lake in Riva was to be a dance; and Rico was to go over the lake to play there. So he could not spend the Sunday with Stineli and the others; that had been talked over several times during the week for it was an event in which all were concerned, if Rico did not come, and Stineli tried her best to find a good side in the happening. "You go then in the sunshine over the lake and return under the star-covered sky, and we think of you the whole time," she had told him when first he spoke of the dance Sunday.

Rico came Saturday evening with his violin, for Stineli's greatest joy was his playing. Rico played beautiful melodies one after the other, but they were all sad, and it seemed that they acted on the player, for he looked at his violin with a gloominess as if it did some harm to him.

Suddenly he put away his bow long before it struck ten, and said: "I will go."

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Mrs. Menotti wanted to keep him, but she did not understand what he was thinking. But Stineli had watched him closely while he had been playing; now she only said, "I will go a few steps with you."

"No!" cried Silvio, "do not go away, stay here, Stineli."

"Yes, yes, Stineli," said Rico, "stay here, and let me go." With these words he looked at Stineli just as he had when he came from the teacher to the woodpile and said: "All is lost."

Stineli went to Silvio's bed and said softly: "Be good, Silvio; I will tell you the funniest story tomorrow, about Peterli, but you must not make any noise now."

Silvio really did keep quiet and Stineli went after Rico. When they stood at the garden fence, Rico turned round and pointed to the brightly lighted room, which looked so home-like from the garden, and said: "Go back, Stineli; you belong there and are at home there, and I belong on the street, I am only a homeless one, and so it will always be; therefore let me go!"

"No, no, I shall not let you go thus; Rico, where are you going now?"

"To the lake," said Rico, and went toward the bridge. Stineli went with him. When

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they stood at the hillside, they heard the waves whispering softly below and they listened for a while, then Rico said:

“You see, Stineli, if you were not here, I should go away at once, far away, but I should not know where. I shall have to be a homeless wanderer and play in taverns my whole life long, where there is an eternal tumult as if they were crazy, and I must sleep in a room, where I would rather never go in; and you belong now to them in the beautiful house and I belong nowhere. And do you see, when I look down there, then I think if my mother had only thrown me into the lake, before she had to die, then I would not have become a homeless one.”

Stineli had listened to Rico with a troubled heart, but when he said these last words, she had a great shock and exclaimed: “Oh, Rico, you must not say anything like that. I am afraid you have not prayed your Lord’s prayer for a long time, therefore these bad thoughts have come to you.”

“No, I have not prayed it long since, I have forgotten it.”

That was terrible news for Stineli.

“If Grandmother knew that, Rico,” she lamented, “she would be in great trouble on your account. Do you know what she often

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said: 'He who forgets the Lord's prayer, will suffer for it!' Oh, come, Rico, you must learn it again, I will teach it to you. You will soon know it again." And Stineli began and said with warm compassion in her heart, twice in succession, the Lord's prayer to Rico. As he now followed the words, in deepest interest, Stineli noticed that there was much comfort in them for Rico, and when she had ended, she said: "You see, Rico, because the kingdom belongs to the dear Lord, so He can find a home for you, and to Him belongs also the power, that He can give it to you."

"Now you can see, Stineli," said Rico, "If God had a home for me in His kingdom, and had the power to give it to me, then He does not want to give me a home."

"But you have to consider one thing," Stineli continued, "the dear God may say to Himself: 'If Rico wants to get something from Me, then he can pray for it and tell Me what he wants.'"

Rico could not say anything against that. He was silent for a long while, then he said: "Say once more the Lord's prayer, I will learn it again."

Stineli said it once more, then Rico knew it again, and had it well in his mind. Now they

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went peacefully home, each side by side, and Rico must still think on the Kingdom and the Power. But in the evening, when he was in his quiet room, he prayed with his whole heart very humbly, for he felt that he had done wrong to think that God should give him what he wanted and he had never prayed for it.

Stineli stepped thoughtfully into the garden. She was considering whether she should talk with Mrs. Menotti; perhaps she might find a different occupation for Rico, than this playing for dances in taverns, which was so distasteful to him. But the thought of troubling Mrs. Menotti with her affairs left her when she entered the room. Silvio lay as red as fire on his pillows, and breathed quickly and irregularly, and Mrs. Menotti sat by his bed and was weeping bitterly. Silvio had had again one of his attacks and great pain, and a little anger that Stineli was away might have increased the fever. The mother was more downcast than Stineli had ever known her. When finally she cheered up a little, she said:

“Come, Stineli, sit down here beside me, I should like to tell you something. You see, something lies so heavily on my heart, that I often feel that I cannot bear it any longer. To be sure, you are young, but you are a sensible

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girl and have seen much, and I feel it would ease me if I were to speak with you over my trouble. You see how it is with Silvio, my only son. Now I have not only the sorrow of his illness, which can never get better, but I must often tell myself, it is perhaps a judgment of God, because we have kept unjust possession and are enjoying it, although we did not wish to keep it. But I will tell you all from the beginning.

“When we married, Menotti and I,—he had fetched me across from Riva, where my father is still living,—then Menotti had here a friend, who wanted to leave Peschiera because he had learned to dislike the place, for he had lost his wife. He had a cottage and a large piece of land, not especially good land, but a very large stretch. Then he wanted my husband to take care of everything, and said that the land did not bring in much, he should keep it in order and the house also, until he should return in a few years.

“So the friends arranged it between them and they thought much of each other and they made no arrangement about interest. My husband said: ‘You must have your affairs in order when you come back,’ for he wanted to look well after his friend’s belongings, and he

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understood farming and his friend knew that and left everything to him.

“But a year after he went, the railroad was built, the cottage had to go with the garden; and the field was needed, for the railroad ran over it. So my husband received much more money than the estate was worth, and he bought good land farther down, and the garden, and built this house, all from the money which he received for the cottage and the poor land. And the land brought in more than double, so that we have the richest harvest. But I said to my husband, ‘It does not belong to us, and we live in plenty out of the estate of someone else; if we only knew, where he is!’ But my husband quieted me and said: ‘I keep everything in order for him, and when he returns, then everything is his and of the gain, which I put aside, he must have his share also.’

“Then Silvio came to us, and when I discovered that the child was paralyzed, I had to talk more and more to my husband and say: ‘We are living in wrong possession, it is God’s punishment for our wrongdoing.’ And many a time it seemed to me such a load, that I almost would have preferred to be poor and without a roof. But my husband comforted me again and said: ‘You will see how satisfied

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he will be with me when he comes.' But he never came. Then my husband died, four years ago; you cannot imagine what I have suffered since then, and I must always think, how can I get rid of the wrong possession without doing wrong, for I have to keep the estate in order until the friend returns. And then I wonder again, if he is now somewhere in misery, and I live meanwhile so well from his estate and know nothing about him."

Stineli had felt very sorry for the lady, for she could imagine so well how the woman felt, who accused herself of doing wrong and yet could not change it. And she comforted Mrs. Menotti and said to her, that if one did not wish to do wrong, and would so much like to make good, then one should pray with confidence to God and ask Him that He would help, for He could make something good out of that which we had made wrong, and He would do it if we were sorry for that, which we had made wrong. She knew all that from the grandmother, for she, Stineli, once had not known how to help herself and had suffered great fear.

Then Stineli told about the lake which Rico always had had in his mind, and how it was her fault that he had run away, and how she then

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had feared that he had perished. And she said that she had become happy again after she had prayed and had given all her care to the dear God, and Mrs. Menotti must do the same, then she would have a light heart, and she could then think always joyously: "Now the Lord has taken the thing in His hand."

Mrs. Menotti now came into a pious mood from Stineli's words. She could go now peacefully to rest, Stineli had made her very happy with her confidence in the Lord.

CHAPTER XX

Rico Finds his Home



WHEN the golden Sunday morning shone over the garden with the red flowers, Mrs. Menotti stepped out of the house and sat down on the bench near the hedge. She looked all around and had her own thoughts. Here the oleander flowers and the laurel hedge behind them, there the full fig-trees and the golden grapes among them, —then she said softly to herself: “God knows I should be glad if the wrong were taken from my conscience, but I should find it nowhere so beautiful as it is here.”

Now Rico came into the garden, he had to go away in the afternoon, and he could not stand it to be away the whole day without coming at all. Just when he was about going to the room, Mrs. Menotti called to him and said:

“Sit down for a moment here with me; who knows how long we shall sit here beside each other!”

Rico was frightened.

RICO FINDS HIS HOME

“Why, Mrs. Menotti, I hope you are not thinking of leaving?”

Now Mrs. Menotti had to turn the conversation, she could not tell her story. There came into her mind what Stineli had said about Rico, but she had been so full of her own affairs that she had not understood it very clearly. Now it began to surprise her, since it came again into her mind.

“Tell me, Rico,” she began, “were you here when you were a child so that you wanted to see the lake again, as Stineli told me yesterday?”

“Yes, when I was very small,” said Rico, “then I left.”

“But how did you come here, when you were little?”

“I was born here.”

“What, here? What was your father, that he came down here from the mountains?”

“He was not born in the mountains, only mother.”

“What are you saying, Rico? Your father was not from here?”

“Yes, he was from here.”

“You never have told that, that is so remarkable! You have no name from here; what was your father’s name?”

“Like mine: Henrico Trevillo.”

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Mrs. Menotti jumped up from the bench, as though something had struck her.

“What do you say, Rico,” she cried, “what did you say just now?”

“My father’s name,” Rico said quietly.

Mrs. Menotti had not listened any more, she had run to the door.

“Stineli, give me a shawl,” she cried into the house. “I have to go at once to the pastor. I am trembling in every limb.”

Much surprised, Stineli brought the shawl.

“Come a few steps with me, Rico,” said Mrs. Menotti on leaving, “I have to ask you something more.”

Twice more Rico had to tell his father’s name, and at the pastor’s door she asked him for the third time, whether he was sure of it. Then she stepped into the house. Rico turned back and wondered over Mrs. Menotti’s behavior.

Rico had brought his violin along, as he knew that it gave Stineli pleasure when he came with it. When he now arrived with it in the room, he found Silvio and Stineli in the best of moods, for Stineli, according to her promise, had told him the story of Peterli and by doing this, she had put herself and Silvio in the best of humor. When now the latter espied the violin he cried

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out: "Now we will sing the Lambkins together with Stineli." Stineli had never heard her song, since she had made it. Rico now played many beautiful melodies, and for a long time no one had thought of the song.

But that little Silvio should wish to sing the song was a great surprise to Stineli, for she did not know how many hundred times Rico had sung the song to Silvio. Stineli was delighted that she should hear her song again and was to sing it with Rico. Now they began and Silvio sang along with all his might without understanding a word; he had learned the words by their sound and had kept them through the many repetitions. But this time the laughing was from Stineli, for Silvio pronounced some of the words so peculiarly that she could not sing for laughing, and when now Silvio saw Stineli laugh so with her whole face, he too began and then he sang still louder, so that Stineli had to scream from laughing, and Rico fiddled his "Lambkins come down" with all his might.

So the singing laughter met Mrs. Menotti's ears at a distance, when she was approaching her garden, and she could not comprehend how that could be in this eventful hour. She came hastily through the garden and stepped into the

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room. She had to sit down on the first chair, for the fright and the joy, and the running and the expectation of all coming things had overwhelmed her, and she had first to collect herself. The singers had become silent and looked, surprised, at the mother. Now she had herself under control.

“Rico,” she said, more solemnly than was her wont, “Rico, look around. This house, this garden, the fields, everything that you see here and that you cannot see from above to below, belongs to you. You are the owner, it is your paternal inheritance. Here is your home; your name is in the baptismal book, you are the son of Henrico Trevillo, and he was my husband’s dearest friend.”

Stineli had understood everything at the first few words, and inexpressible joy spread over her face. Rico sat there like one turned to stone, and could not utter a sound. But Silvio, foreboding great fun, broke forth in loud rejoicing and called out:

“Now everything all at once belongs to Rico! Where must he sleep?”

“Must? Must? Silvio?” said the mother. “In every room, where he will; he can send us all three out of the house today, if he wanted to, and live in the house all alone.”

RICO FINDS HIS HOME

“Then I would rather go out with you,” said Rico.

“Oh, you good Rico!” exclaimed Mrs. Menotti. “If you want to have us in the house, then we will gladly stay. Already on my way home I have thought out how we could arrange it. I could take half the house and so with the garden and the land, then half of all would belong to you, and the other to Silvio.”

“Then I should give my half to Stineli,” cried Silvio.

“And I my half, too,” said Rico.

“Oho, now everything belongs to Stineli,” rejoiced the little fellow from out of his bed, “the garden and the house and everything in it, the chairs and the tables and I and Rico and the violin. Now we will sing again.”

But Rico did not consider the thing so easily settled as Silvio did. Meanwhile he had thought over Mrs. Menotti’s words and now asked hesitatingly: “But how could the house of Silvio’s father belong to me because he was my father’s friend?”

Then Mrs. Menotti remembered that Rico knew nothing of the whole occurrence, and she began at once to tell the story and more completely than she had told Stineli the evening before. And when she had finished, the three

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understood and all three began to rejoice aloud, for there was no reason why Rico should not enter his home at once, and never leave it again. But in the midst of the rejoicing Rico said:

“Because everything is now as it is, Mrs. Menotti, there need not be any change in the house, I come now also and am at home with you, and we remain together and you are our mother.”

“Oh, Rico, that it is you, that it is you! How beautifully the Lord has arranged everything! That I have to surrender everything to you and yet may remain with a good conscience. And I will be a good mother to you, Rico, you will see, I have loved you long since like my own child. Now you must call me Mother, and Stineli, too, and we shall be the happiest household of all Peschiera!”

“But now we must finish our song,” cried Silvio, who wanted to sing and rejoice, to have an outlet for his feelings, and Stineli and Rico began their song again, for they both were not less happy. But when they had finished, Stineli said: “I should like to sing a song with you, Rico, do you know which one?”

“Yes, I know it,” answered Rico, “and I will gladly sing it with you, and we will begin with grandmother’s verses,” and he began and

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sang so beautifully deep out of himself as he had never sung before, and Stineli sang with her whole heart with him:

“He never yet has made mistakes
In His great government,
No, what He does and lets be done
For thy own good is meant.

Then let Him rule, and further do
Whate'er He may desire,
Then thou wilt rest in peace on earth
And joy thy soul acquire.”

But Rico did not go to Riva that day. Mother Menotti had advised him to go at once to the Inn to tell the landlady of his changed position, to order a violin player to Riva and to move this very day into his house. This proposition pleased Rico, and he hastened to the town. The landlady listened to him with greatest surprise when he told her of the change in his fortune; when he was through, she called her husband and expressed great delight, and wished Rico every blessing in his new home, and it came from her heart. Then, too, she had become suspicious that the landlady of the “Three Crowns” was trying to get Rico away from her, and that would have broken her

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heart. That could not now happen, and that Rico had become an estate-owner was a great joy to her, for she had grown very fond of him.

And her husband had his special joy for he had known Rico's father, and could not understand that it had never entered his mind, since Rico was the image of his father. So Rico took friendly leave of the people, and as the landlady shook his hand again at the door, she recommended her house in case Rico sometime wanted it for some great feast.

The same evening everyone in Peschiera knew of the change that had come to Rico, and much more besides, and everyone wished him luck, and one said to the other: "He fits so well as master of his estate, as if he had been born in it."

But Mother Menotti did not know how she could have everything good enough for the new owner. She made ready the large room upstairs with the two windows over the garden and over the lake; and from the walls pretty marble figures looked down on him, and on the table stood a large bunch of flowers, and the whole room looked so clean and festive that Rico stopped at the door, where Stineli had conducted him, and where he now was received by Mother Menotti. But when the latter took

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his hand and led him to the window where he could see the shining lake and the violet mountains at a distance, then Rico's heart became so over-filled with gratitude and thanks that he could only murmur: "Oh, how beautiful! And now I may be at home!"

In the room below with the open door into the garden the family spent happy, untroubled days so that they did not know how time passed.

In the daytime Rico went with his whistling man over his estate, to the fig trees and to the corn, for now he must learn all about these things. And the servant thought: "I know more than my master," and pride rose within him. But when in the evening, he leaned on the gate and listened for hours to the violin playing, then he thought: "My master knows more than I," and had great respect for his master.

CHAPTER XXI

Sunshine on the Beautiful Garda Lake



TWO years had thus passed, always each day more enjoyable than the last. Then Stineli knew that the time of her departure had come, and she had to battle with herself that she did not lose courage, for to go away and perhaps never to come back, was the hardest thought that had ever oppressed her heart. Also Rico knew what now ought to be; and he did not say a word for days and days except what was necessary. Then it grew uneasy to Mother Menotti, and she tried to find out the unknown cause, for she had long since forgotten that Stineli was to be confirmed. When it now came out what the trouble was, Mother Menotti said quietly: "One can wait a year longer." And so all lived another year in contentment and joy.

But in the third year the message came from Bergamo that someone had come from the mountains, who had the order to take Stineli home with him. Now it had to be. Little Silvio acted like one possessed, but it was of no

SUNSHINE ON THE GARDA LAKE

use, nothing could be done against fate. Mother Menotti, the last three days, kept on saying: "Be sure you come back, Stineli; promise to your father whatever he wants, if he only will let you go."

Rico said nothing. So Stineli left, and from that day on, there lay a gray, heavy cloud on the house although the sun might shine as brightly outside as it was possible. So it remained from November to Easter, when all people rejoice, but in Rico's house all was still. And when the feast was over, and in the garden everything was blooming, much more beautifully than ever before, then Rico sat one evening at Silvio's bed and played the saddest melodies which he knew, and made little Silvio quite melancholy, but all at once there came a voice from the garden which called out: "Rico, Rico, have you not a merrier reception for me?"

Silvio screamed aloud like one beside himself. Rico threw his violin on Silvio's bed and rushed out. Mother Menotti rushed in from fright. There stood on the threshold Stineli beside Rico. And as her eyes laughed again into the room—there was again the long-lost sunshine; and there was such a joyous meeting as none of them could have imagined. Now

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they sat again around the table by Silvio's bed, and there was a questioning and reporting and telling, and then again a rejoicing over the return, that one would have thought that nothing was lacking to these four people, for perfect happiness. But it was different with Rico. In the midst of all this joy he began suddenly to wonder, as he used to do, but it did not last long, he must have found a satisfactory decision, for suddenly the wondering had passed, and with the greatest firmness he said: "Stineli has to be my wife right away, else she will leave us again, and we cannot bear it."

Silvio was at once full of enthusiasm for this new undertaking, and it did not take long, when all agreed that it must be so and could not be different. On the most beautiful day of May which had ever risen over Peschiera, a procession moved from the church toward the inn "At the Golden Sun." First came tall Rico, walking stately along, at his side the bright-eyed Stineli with a crown of fresh flowers on her head, then came in a softly-bolstered carriage drawn by two joyous boys of Peschiera, little Silvio, beaming happily like a triumvir; then came Mother Menotti, deeply touched, in her rustling wedding splendor. After her came the gardener, with a nosegay

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which covered his whole chest, and now came the whole of Peschiera, in noisy enthusiasm, for all wanted to see the handsome couple and celebrate with them. It was a general family festivity of the people of Peschiera, now the lost and returned Peschieran was about to form a firmly-established home in his native town.

The joy of victory of the landlady of the "Golden Sun" when she saw the procession arrive before her house, cannot be described; whenever afterwards any wedding, high or low, was talked of, she would say with superiority: "That is all nothing in comparison to Rico's wedding in the 'Golden Sun'."

The sunshine never went away from the house in the flower garden, but Stineli took care that the Lord's Prayer was never forgotten, and every Sunday evening the hymn of Grandmother resounded in bright chorus out into the open air.

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